Working in Music on the Semiperiphery

Local Cultural Production and Global Capitalism

EMÍLIA BARNA

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Introduction

Points of Departure

This book looks at labor in the music industries in Hungary today. It addresses the characteristics and conditions of the work of musicians in various popular music genres and segments—pop, rock, jazz, electronic music, hip hop, as well as film and wedding music—as well as behind-the-scenes workers such as sound engineers, technicians, music managers, and live music promoters. Based on qualitative research conducted between 2018 and 2022, it offers an analysis of these cultural workers' experiences and how these are shaped by various local- as well as global-level social, economic, technological, and political forces. I begin by highlighting three distinct, though, in many ways, interrelated, points of departure for my enquiry into labor in music in Hungary. These are followed by a theoretical outline of the analysis and the presentation of the main aims, the methods used, and the book structure.

WORKING(?) IN MUSIC ON THE SEMIPERIPHERY

A first point of departure concerns the social status and value of cultural, and within it, musical work: indeed, whether working in music is, and can be, considered to be work at all, and under what conditions is a question that has social and theoretical significance. The COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis brought into sharp focus the question of the value of the work of musicians. The pandemic broke out when I was midway through the data collection phase of my research on musical labor in Hungary. It was evident from the start that it would directly and drastically affect the live music sector with prolonged effects shaping the future of work in the music industries. Live music, including shows in club venues, cafés, public and private events (such as weddings), as well as music festivals and free local events (village fairs, town days, gastronomic festivals), is the area of music that has grown most visibly in Hungary in the years preceding the time of the research.[1] Although live music as an industry has also grown globally in the last twenty years and increased in magnitude in relation to recorded music (Frith 2007; Brennan and Webster 2011), in Hungary,

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[1] At the time of writing this book, there are also strong signs of growth in digital music in economic terms, including that of providing income for at least a small number of musicians—yet this is a more recent trend.

the proportion of the sector within the music industries is even greater.[2] In 2018, the value of the live music sector was estimated at 35 billion forints (89 million euros) (Virágh and Főző 2018, 8). At the same time, the recorded music sector barely exceeded half of the size of the former at 18.4 billion forints (47 million euros) (20). Live music also accounted for the majority of Hungarian musicians' income at 59% in 2019 (Jakab and Főző 2020, 47),[3] which underlines the severity of the economic and existential blow dealt to musicians and music industry workers by the pandemic-related restrictions and the following series of crises.

On the one hand, at least during the initial lockdown months in 2020, music, especially collective forms of engaging with music, was used in various places to boost public morale. Viral footage of singing and playing instruments on balconies (initially from Italy) permeated social media, and musicians initiating "quarantine gigs," namely live streaming from their bed- or living rooms and chatting to their audiences, drew on the perceived power of music to engender community and solidarity. Moreover, governments and authorities also utilized music to boost public morale: for instance, the Viennese police force played a recording of the song "I am from Austria" (1989) by Rainhard Fendrich, considered a kind of second national anthem in Austria, in the streets during the first lockdown period.[4] In Hungary, the right-wing Fidesz party-led government— the fourth Viktor Orbán government (2018–2022)—also relied on recording and disseminating songs and corresponding music videos via social media to imbue their lockdown-time communication towards the public with affective power. For instance, "Európa 2020" (Nagy Szilárd Music Official 2020) was recorded as a new version of "Európa" (1984) by Miklós Varga, a song originally associated with the 1989/1990 regime change (*rendszerváltás*), that is, the end of state socialism and institutional reintegration into the capitalist world-system. The new version, with slightly modified lyrics and featuring two new singers,[5] calls on solidarity, "common sense" at a time of peril, and the Christian values of "old" Europe, of which Hungary is regularly portrayed as the defender in Fidesz' populist discourse. Popular music was thus, at least in Hungary, utilized by the governing power to extend its symbolic and ideological control (Barna and Patakfalvi-Czirják 2022a).

Yet, despite these moments of music—and some musicians—gaining a highlighted, morally elevated, as well as political role, the amount of state support for music industry workers who had temporarily or permanently lost their income, in addition to losing their professions and professional identities, varied

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[2]   Tolstad (2021) observes the same for Russia.
[3]   Nevertheless, as we will see, there is great variety in musicians' income structure, partly based on genre (e.g., producers working in home studios versus wedding musicians).
[4]   I thank André Doehring and Kai Ginkel for this example.
[5]   The singers were Szilárd Nagy and Misa Ragány, the latter of whom also held a position at the Ministry of Human Resources between 2018–2021.

considerably globally. Within Europe, Germany was widely cited as a positive example due to the extent of state support (the so-called Corona Emergency Aid) provided to cultural workers, but support was also widely given to free-lance cultural workers in the Netherlands or the UK. In Hungary, in contrast, as I demonstrate in more detail in chapter 2, state support was scarce, came late, and was also interwoven with political and ideological aspects linked to the hegemony building of the fourth Orbán government.

When musicians and other industry workers and institutions (e.g., live music venues) publicly voiced their desire for, or even merely their acceptance of, state support, these declarations were accompanied by heated public debates in the media, including social media, around the grounds for such a claim. The debates were partly around who is *in need of* support. In one instance, to maintain transparency, the collecting society Artisjus[6] published the names of the 400 recipients of its one-off grant (the gross amount was 160000 forints; 400 euros per recipient), and the better-known names on the list were widely criticized, including by fellow artists, for applying (Sajó 2020a). Besides this, however, who *deserves* support was also an issue: musicians in general were repeatedly told to "get a real job"—literally, to "go and grab a hoe" ("menjenek el kapálni") (e.g., Csepelyi 2020; the slogan acquired social media meme status over the summer of 2020). The imperative refers to hard physical labor, as opposed to what is perceived as a light, fun activity; musicians "doing what they love" (Conor, Gill, and Taylor 2015; Duffy 2016), which hardly comprises work. As Sally Anne Gross and George Musgrave state in connection with musicians' mental health, there is a strong "idea [in society] that musicians are lucky to do the work they do, so they should have no cause to complain" (Gross and Musgrave 2016, 7). Aesop's fable of the ant and the grasshopper served as a regular symbolic reference, strengthening the moral framing of this discourse, which, ultimately, is about who deserves sympathy and support by having earned it with genuine toil.

Over the summer of 2020, we conducted online sociodrama groups with musicians and other music industry workers. These clearly indicated that what they perceived as public hatred shocked many musicians and music industry workers. The phenomenon, however, has deeper social and historical roots. Bojana Kunst—well before the COVID-19 crisis—referred to the view of the artist as a "social parasite" "in more authoritarian European societies," whose work is suspicious because they abound in pleasure, and whose "activities are first to be sanctioned" during times of crisis (Kunst 2015, 151–52). The observed hatred may be viewed as evidencing existing social tensions, partly shaped by political discourses on "deserving" and "undeserving" citizens, which has accompanied the labor politics of the post-2010 Fidesz-led governments in

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6   The association's full name is Artisjus Hungarian Bureau for the Protection of Authors' Rights.

Hungary (Czirfusz et al. 2019). The questioning of deservingness, however, in this case also hinges on the questioning of the value of cultural labor, and even its status as work. In her Marxist analysis, Katja Praznik convincingly argues that the labor aspect of "art work," understood as the work of artists, has been rendered invisible in capitalism through the bourgeois ideology of autonomous art: "the postulation of art as an autonomous sphere removed from the rumble and drudgery of everyday working life and economic pressure" (Praznik 2021, 38). As the tension around musicians' claims during the COVID-19 crisis clearly shows, there are economic stakes—livelihoods—in recognition as work: Praznik argues that the rendering invisible of art work in capitalism has served as an ideological justification for not paying artists, or not paying them well. This ideology also implies that art can be done by those not reliant on income (38)—in other words, it remains a privilege of the bourgeoisie. Moreover, not conceiving of artistic professions as work may also hinder collective organization.

Although these are crucial arguments about the social status and value of cultural work, it is worth distinguishing between the narrower group of "art" workers discussed by Praznik, who arguably constitute an elite of cultural workers, and cultural workers in a broader sense, namely those workers that contribute to the cultural industries and cultural production in various ways and occupy different social positions. In the case of popular music, these range from prestigious pop/rock stars to studio sound engineers working behind the scenes. One important aspect that the "music is not real work" discourse renders invisible in the Hungarian context is how the majority of musicians are not solely, or even primarily, reliant on music making for income. This, moreover, also applies to many other professions in the industry. In 2018, out of 590 surveyed musicians, 59% indicated that they engaged in income-generating outside of music, and a further 20% stated that they pursued music-related side activities besides their main performing or writing job (Virágh and Főző 2018, 40). In concrete terms, besides music projects or acts which musicians felt closer to—that might, in other words, be important for their artistic self-realization—they may play weddings during summer weekends or act as session musicians or writers in various other projects that they may not otherwise find musically challenging or interesting; they might do sound engineering, sound technician work or management on the side. In addition, many have "day jobs" unrelated to music—in fact, they might well be doing "real" manual labor.

In this book, I regard and analyze music *as* labor: labor that feeds into the capitalist cultural industries, producing profit for digital platform companies, live music corporations, record labels, as well as various other intermediaries; and labor that is also partly subsidized by the state, and this subsidization is embedded in a historically and politically shaped value regime. I focus on the work of not only musicians but also diverse workers who contribute to the production

of popular music, and I address the social relations among these diverse groups. I also address the ways in which work contributing to the creation of music in commodified forms intersects with other labor—both formal, such as the mentioned "day jobs," and informal, in particular domestic or reproductive labor.

DIGITALIZATION

The second point of departure is the increasing permeation of the cultural sphere by digital technology, which has significantly transformed the ways in which culture, including music, is produced in industrial as well as everyday settings. Along with professional commentary, discussions, and speculation ongoing in the music industries for over three decades, research into the specific ways in which the digital turn has impacted the production of music has primarily focused on the new: on identifying change and repeated attempts at predicting the "future of the music industry" (e.g., Wikström 2010; Pikas, Pikas, and Lymburner 2011; Collins and Young 2014; Mulligan 2015; some of the most comprehensive accounts are Leyshon 2014; Morris 2015; Suhr 2012). The music industries, or the organization of the economy of music, is often assumed to be a good indicator of social, economic, and cultural change in general—which is a claim usually formulated with reference to Jacques Attali's ([1977] 2009, 4) view of music as "prophetic" (e.g., Leyshon 2001, 49; Mazierska, Gillon, and Rigg 2019, 1). Attali made this claim as part of his analysis of the political economy of music and how it is embedded into the development of the capitalist system. Music, at the same time, has also been argued—justifiably—to be at the forefront of technological development, whether consumer electronics, studio technology, or software. The emergence and spreading of the MP3 format during the 1990s, and the peer-to-peer MP3 file-sharing platform Napster in 1999, was heralded by techno-optimists as a disruptive and revolutionary innovation that would change the power relations not only of the music industries, but society in general, leading to a more democratic, culturally diverse global society that is governed not by capital and greed but by sharing, gift-giving, and community (Carter and Rogers 2014). This utopia never materialized; in fact, Napster instead acted as a model "business and one that laid more of the foundations (along with [digital music player] Winamp and metadata) for a market in digital music commodities" (Morris 2015, 97). Studies of music and digitalization focusing on production rather than consumption have often asked how digital distribution, from peer-to-peer file sharing to music streaming, enables musicians as cultural producers to bypass record companies—undoubtedly the most important gatekeepers of the recording industry before the digital era—as well as "old" media such as radio or television in selling their music to audiences. This

can be referred to as the disintermediation narrative (Collins and Young 2014, 52). Other, more recent studies have explored the process of new intermediaries—MP3 stores such as iTunes, social media and streaming platforms, and the digital distributor companies connecting creators with these platforms—at least partly replacing "old" ones, and debate what this means in terms of control over production and the product (e.g., Galuszka 2015; Morris and Powers 2015; Lobato 2016; Jansson and Hracs 2018). As such studies indicate, techno-optimistic—and pessimistic—accounts have gradually been replaced by more nuanced and critical analyses that view technological development as embedded into social structures and the capitalist economy.

Although there are many accounts of change in relation to cultural production and digital technology that identify current trends, in-depth explorations of the multi-layered, historically, socially, and geographically embedded working practices and regimes of labor organization that form part of the "post-digital"—where digital is no longer necessarily new, but rather already historical—world of work in music are fewer in number. Besides pioneers of new technologies, older generations of artists or small record label owners still socialized in the pre- or early digital era struggle to come to terms with "new" ways and demands of working shaped by the constantly changing landscape of the industry, including the emergence of streaming and the ever-increasing role of social media and on-line self-promotion. As Tamas Tofalvy emphasizes, the coexistence of technologies—and it should be added, the ways of working with these technologies—is a definitive, although often overlooked aspect of the relationship between music and (digital) technology:

> Music television did not kill the radio star, and neither has the Internet the music television or the radio star.[7] [...] [T]he current music technology ecosystem, vinyl, audio cassettes, CDs, and various analog and digital formats, similarly to devices such as turntables, tablets, smartphones, and mp3 players—all of which have their own histories (Taylor 2001, 7)—exist simultaneously. (Tofalvy 2020, 5–6)

This layeredness is perhaps particularly apparent in locations outside the geographical centers of global (popular) music production and technological innovation. In Hungary, the use of file-sharing networks and other resources for free content and software from the turn of the twenty-first century may be regarded as an organic continuation of the state socialist-era culture of informal exchange and Do-It-Yourself, including the widespread practice of copying and trading cassette tapes—a practice both part of everyday life in the 1980s and laying the foundations of a music industry entrepreneurship emerging in the 1990s. Free

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[7]   The reference is to the recordings "Video Killed the Radio Star" (1979) by The Buggles, and its reinterpretation "Internet Killed the Video Star" (2010) by The Limousines.

access to music through illegal or semi-legal file-sharing also paved the way for the predominant use of legally free[8] music streaming services at the time of the research, such as the non-subscription use of YouTube or Spotify. This predominance of free use impacts—negatively—the possibilities of musicians to generate income on streaming platforms.

In addition, the role assumed by the state through policy, regulations, and the operation of trade organizations such as copyright collecting societies also impacts the relationship between digitalization and music industry working conditions, and this also varies across countries and regions. As an example, the Hungarian Performer's Rights Protection Association Office (EJI) was only able to reach an agreement with the streaming platforms Deezer (entering Hungary in 2012) and Spotify (entering Hungary in 2013) by filing lawsuits against both companies (*Eji.hu* 2019; *Musichungary.hu* 2022), the first of which was won by EJI in 2018, while the second ended in a mutual agreement in 2021. It was only following these lawsuits that the mentioned streaming companies began to pay performance royalties for Hungarian recording artists (including some royalties retrospectively). What this shows is, first, that such payments are not guaranteed but rather depend on the relations between specific actors, companies with a global reach as well as local organizations—an aspect of digitalization that is often missed in generalizing accounts. Second, it also means that performing artists had previously been deprived of this income, which demonstrates their vulnerability and dependence on the mentioned actors and their relations, which are embedded into complex global economic and political relations. At the same time, during the time of my research, songwriters complained that they were not receiving any composition royalties after digital streaming, apparently because collecting society Artisjus had been unable, due to lack of resources, to develop a system for the processing of the abundance of data flowing in from streaming platforms that would form the basis of royalty allocation (Juhász 2021; Sajó 2021b). This situation is not unique to Hungary, even if the specificities of the mentioned deals or practices are. These examples demonstrate, instead, that even though streaming platforms are global companies, local conditions and the country's position within the global capitalist system considerably shape the working conditions of artists locally. It is these local conditions and global embeddedness that form the context of my analysis of (digitalized) musical labor in Hungary.

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8   These services are only free in the sense that they do not require a subscription—nevertheless, the user pays with their consumption of advertisements as well as their data, which the companies in question can capitalize upon (e.g., Fuchs 2014, 243–82).

GENDER RELATIONS

The third point of departure is the issue of gender relations within the music industries, which in recent years has most often been articulated in terms of sexism, sexual harassment, gender violence (e.g., Hill, Hesmondhalgh, and Megson 2019; Brooks et al. 2021; McCarry et al. 2023), or gender imparity and exclusion (e.g., O'Sullivan 2018). Such recent thematization is not independent of a broader cultural industry discourse around sexism, (un)equal representation, and sexual harassment. In the film industry, during what became known as the Harvey Weinstein Scandal, prominent female actors exposed their experiences, spanning several decades, of sexual harassment and abuse by Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein (Kantor and Twohey 2017), one of the most powerful male figures of Hollywood. The actors' coming forward was followed by a global campaign, partly within the cultural industries (e.g., film, theater, music, and the literary field), but also extended to society in general through the so-called "MeToo" social media hashtag campaign, to highlight and demonstrate the extent of the problem. Media discussions around the scandal and the ongoing campaign have addressed gender inequalities and dynamics of power within the cultural industries, and even the relationship between the patriarchal relations of the cultural industries and the cultural product through a critique of the discursive practice of "separating the art from the artist" (e.g., Hess 2017; James 2020; Cheng 2022). The media events also generated multiple responses and initiatives from within the music industries: for instance, the "MeNoMore" hashtag was initiated by musicians in Australia, and the BBC aired a documentary entitled "Rape and Abuse: The Music Industry's Dark Side" (*BBC News* 2017). The Hungarian music magazine *Recorder* also featured a summary of sexual abuse "stories" in the international music industries emerging in 2017 to highlight "the structural exploitation of women in the industry" (Rónai 2017).

The years preceding the writing of this book have also seen an increase in scholarly inquiries into violence against women and gender inequalities in the music industries (e.g., the 2018 "Gender Politics in the Music Industry" special issue of *IASPM Journal* [Strong and Raine 2018]; Strong and Raine 2019; Brooks et al. 2021; Hill 2022) or the history of popular music (e.g., Strong 2019). Parallel to these, gender equality and fighting sexual violence have also emerged as industry policy objectives with increasing frequency. Most prominently, some music festivals implemented gender quota systems in their lineup to fight the existing strong masculine dominance (e.g., in 2018, the BBC reported that 45 music festivals pledged to achieve a 50/50 balance by 2022; Savage [2018]). The international program Keychange, aiming to achieve gender equality in the music industries through partnering primarily with music festivals, was launched as part of the EU Creative Europe program. Companies also began, at least on

a representative level, to integrate representation-based gender equality policies, as exemplified by the streaming platform Spotify's collaboration with Smirnoff to create the "Smirnoff Equalizer," a microsite within Spotify that offers "a more balanced playlist tailored to [listeners'] Taste Profile" (Spotify Advertising Team 2020). Gender (in)equality, lastly, has become a regular topic at industry round-tables, conferences, and symposia.

Industry discussions in the Hungarian context have followed these trends from the global core, and at least on a number of occasions, gender inequality has been thematized at industry events, music festivals (e.g., the talk "Representation of gender roles in Hungarian music videos" at the 5. Magyar Klipszemle [5th Hungarian Video Awards] in 2021 or the Women of Music Hungary talk entitled "Women in the Music Industry" at the Művészetek Völgye [Valley of the Arts] festival in the same year), as well as a dedicated symposium ("Gender and Creativity in Music Worlds: MusicaFemina International Symposium" in Budapest, organized at Central European University and the Három Holló venue in January 2020).[9] Artisjus has repeatedly highlighted the relatively small proportion of female writers among their registered songwriters, composers, and lyricists (between 15–17 percent), also mentioning that the situation is nevertheless an improvement from the previous decades (Artisjus 2021). In all, the majority of these industry discussions and initiatives, whether in Hungary or the global core, have focused first and foremost on the inequality of representation, such as the small proportion of female musicians in relation to male ones, especially in certain genres, such as hip hop, or the low percentage of female producers or sound engineers. They tend, however, not to connect these issues to a reflection on working conditions, informal divisions of labor, invisible labor, competition or exploitation in a capitalist industry; even the more serious tackling of violence against women is missing (or missing entirely, as in the Hungarian context). Moreover, gender inequality is typically framed in these discussions and policies as an industry problem rather than a broader social and global structural issue linked to the patriarchal gender relations of global capitalist society. In Hungary, too, these infrequent reports of reflections on unequal representation fail to connect organically to the society of musicians and music industry workers.[10]

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9   I was among the organizers of the symposium and some of our research conclusions were also featured in the mentioned roundtable discussions, so these instances of thematization were not entirely independent of my own research activity.

10   At the same time, there are some grassroots and/or industry-based organizations with feminist goals. These include: Ladyfest Budapest (the roots of which go back to the 1990s' Riot Grrrl movement); the open-mic improvisation night series Sisters Voice Music, which features only female musicians and includes thematic talks; and, the Lányok a popszakmában [Girls in the pop business] group and event series, which was organized in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis to bring female managers, promoters, and technicians together.

My analysis aims to go beyond the issues of representation and sexism and employ a systematic, critical feminist lens, both theoretical and analytical, to address hierarchical relations in music through the gendered division and organization of labor, the relation between working conditions, including income, and the recognition and visibility of work, and the highlighted role of emotional labor within the work of musicians and music industry workers, the performance of which is similarly gendered.

In sum, this book offers an account of labor in the music industries in a semiperipheral context based on a micro-level analysis of the experiences of musicians and other music industry workers in Hungary in various genres between 2018 and 2022. This temporal focus point encompasses a time of relative industry growth together with significant transformation due to processes of digitalization, as well as increasing political control before and during the COVID-19 crisis. I ask, firstly, what role market and state forces play in the work of musicians and behind-the-scenes music industry workers in this semiperipheral context, and present a historically and geographically contextualized conceptualization of creative autonomy in the popular music sphere. Secondly, I ask what the impacts of digitalization are on working in music in this particular local context. I uncover the ways in which workers are pushed towards digital entrepreneurship and platform labor on the one hand and the live music sector on the other, in the context of local policy, power relations within the industry, and Hungary's position in the capitalist world-system, and I explore the consequences for working conditions. While highlighting local specificities, I also aim to examine how and to what extent these stem from Hungary's position in the global capitalist order. And thirdly, I ask how gender relations impact the organization and experience of this work. Moving beyond the level of representation, I highlight the role of informality, partly through exploring the contribution of the gendered sphere of the household to the music industries and explore, on an empirical as well as theoretical level, the intersections of creative and reproductive labor; and partly through analyzing the crucial role of emotional labor in music, and how it is embedded into gender relations and a gendered division of labor.

Background and Theoretical Framework

APPROACHES TO CULTURAL AND MUSICAL LABOR

The topic of cultural work or creative labor[11] has been receiving increased attention during the past two decades, whether defined simply as work in the cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011, 1), in terms of "the act of labour within the industrialised process of cultural production" (Banks 2007, 3), or as a specific form of labor, which is becoming increasingly dominant in postindustrial societies: labor "geared to the production of original or distinctive commodities that are primarily aesthetic and/or symbolic-expressive, rather than utilitarian and functional" (Banks and Hesmondhalgh 2009, 416). In other words, it has been understood as "human capacities for interpretation, action, improvisation, and judgment using symbols and signs within the context of waged work" (Siciliano 2021, 6).

The cultural industries and the cultural worker have been described as typical representatives of the post-Fordist production framework, characterized by "flexible specialization" (Hesmondhalgh 1996) and flexibilized employment. In fact, the growing attention paid to creative labor cannot be viewed as independent of the broader global neoliberal economic reordering, as part of which, in the global division of labor, economies of the global core (Wallerstein 2004) increasingly invested in the service industries and "creative" economic sectors centered around symbolic production (Hesmondhalgh [2003] 2019, 119–20). Starting from the 1970s, the manufacturing of physical products has been increasingly outsourced from the global core to the semiperiphery and periphery, where labor was cheaper. David Harvey theorized this process as capital's "spatial fix," that is, geographical expansion as a response to the problem of overaccumulation (e.g., Harvey 2001, 335–39); this is experienced as a process of deindustrialization in societies of the global core. Simultaneously, the economies of the global core become increasingly dominated by services and symbolic production. A well-known example is the global commodity chain (Bair 2005) of the fashion industry, where brand companies such as Nike retain design and marketing (Klein 1999)—thus creative and cognitive labor—while the various stages of physical manufacturing, involving arduous and monotonous manual labor, are performed on the periphery, typically South and East Asia, and typically by women and children. Here, wages are kept low, and working conditions are often slave labor-like. Labor, moreover, is also increasingly outsourced to

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[11]   McGuigan (2010, 323) defines "creative labor as a universal human attribute and cultural work as specifically a meaning-making practice" in the context of the cultural industries. However, here I do not employ this distinction and use the terms "cultural labor" and "musical labor" in the latter sense.

the semiperiphery, including Eastern Europe (Smith et al. 2018). As Christian Fuchs (2014) demonstrated, the digital technology industry—which has by now become deeply intertwined with the music industries—is similarly built on the severely unequal geographical organization of production and labor ranging from slave labor in Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-related mineral extraction in African mines through to manufacturing and assemblage under extremely poor working conditions in China; the Indian software engineering industry, and the stark contrast between female migrant workers in Silicon Valley doing semi- and unskilled piecework, often in the domestic sphere, with Google's "labor aristocracy" in the same geographical region. The last of these, whilst comprising the creative-cognitive worker elite of the global digital technology industry, also work under extreme self-exploitation, facilitated, among other things, by workplace design and a particular individualistic work ethic, which ensures that work time is extended well into the sphere of leisure—for instance, through social events where essential career-related networking takes place (Fuchs 2014, 213–32).

The example of Google workers is an apt illustration of what are often highlighted as the main problems with creative labor under global capitalism today. A significant part of critical literature on creative labor, including key publications such as that of Angela McRobbie (2002a; 2002b), David Hesmondhalgh and Sarah Baker (2011), and Mark Banks (2007), has been produced during the last 25 years by UK- or USA-based researchers focusing on case studies from the same countries. The objects of these studies (in addition to those mentioned, e.g., Gill 2002; Gill and Pratt 2008; Neff, Wissinger, and Zukin 2005; Ross 2009) tend to be such areas as the television, film, music, or publishing industries, as well as the fashion or beauty industry. The authors generally share the idea that work in these industries exhibits certain specificities that have also served as a model for labor more generally under western neoliberal capitalism (Stahl 2008; Haynes and Marshall 2018). They usually conclude, critically, that even though creative labor is often assumed to "[represent] a kind of ideal type of unalienated labour" (Huws 2015, 159), which is underpinned by creative self-expression and is therefore more fulfilling than many other kinds of work, creative workers are nevertheless precarious workers. Their working time is "flexible" as they are typically not bound to an office, yet this freedom also translates into material and existential insecurity. The organization of creative work is often project-based, which makes it difficult to plan long-term; recruitment hinges on constant networking and self-presentation, increasingly on social media platforms—which, in the case of artists, also constitute a significant space for audience building. Nancy Baym refers to this part of musicians' work as "relational labor" (2015). The risk of cultural production—including the unpredictability of success or failure (Hesmondhalgh [2002] 2019, 31–32)—is increasingly borne by the individual

worker, who is increasingly becoming an entrepreneur, if a "reluctant" (Haynes and Marshall 2018) or "accidental" one (Coulson 2012). Many studies also focus on the social relations into which creative labor is embedded and the inequalities along gender, race, and class, which the cultural industries tend to reproduce (e.g., Bull and Scharff 2017; Taylor and O'Brien 2017; Littler 2017).

This body of work signifies a notable turn from a predominantly consumption-leaning cultural studies during the preceding decades, which has been criticized from a political economy perspective (Garnham 1995; McGuigan 2002). At the same time, it follows in the wake of a trend that already emerged in the 1980s towards the study of production within the context of the "cultural industries" (e.g., Miège 1989; Garnham 1990). From the 1990s, this trend accompanied the increasing economic reliance, in countries of the global core, on these sectors, namely advertising and marketing, broadcasting, film, internet, the music industries, print and electronic publishing, video and computer games (which Hesmondhalgh names the "core cultural industries" [Hesmondhalgh [2002] 2019, 15]), along with sports, fashion, consumer electronics, and software (16–23). In academic literature the conceptualization of the "cultural and creative industries," often referred to as CCIs, both reflected and provided input to the political goals of strengthening these sectors through investment along with deindustrialization (the UK is a prime example, signified by the forming of the government Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in 1997). The plural use of "industries" itself originates from policy and contrasts with Adorno and Horkheimer's critical "culture industry" concept (Adorno and Horkheimer [1944] 1999; see Hesmondhalgh [2002] 2019, 28–29). Richard Florida's (2002) theory of the rise of the "creative class" and the notion of "creative clusters" (Pratt 2004) as drivers of economic and social development in cities are examples of academic literature that found policy response, not only within the global core, but gradually extended to a global level as a blueprint for urban development and cultural policy worldwide (through e.g., the Creative Europe EU program for CCIs development or program in East Asia [O'Connor and Xin 2006]). As Andrew Ross observed: "As managers struggle to retain a competitive edge in the global economy, they look more and more toward creative workers to generate value for a city, region, and nation" (Ross 2009, 10). While this period produced rich literature with plenty of empirical data, including David Hesmondhalgh's ([2002] 2019) definitive volume *The Cultural Industries*, in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis, the critique of the celebratory tone of works such as Florida's strengthened. Critical analyses have tended to pay more attention to relations of (neoliberal) capitalism structuring labor in the cultural industries and the resulting working conditions. Nevertheless, the "doctrine of creativity" (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011, 2–6) did not disappear after the global crisis of 2008; instead, it has resurfaced in the form of

a discourse in which the CCIs constitute the sector that remains "resilient" in the face of crisis and provides a model or "remedy" (c.f. Dinardi 2019, 2).

Much research on the music industries and digitalization has been formulated from the perspective of music companies, or at least without questioning the logic of capital accumulation (e.g., Anderton, Dubber, and James 2012). Recently, however, a focus on labor in music has also been gaining traction. This body of work, which to a significant part forms the ground for my inquiry, includes important theorizations and descriptions of the music industries from a production and work perspective (Toynbee 2000); including a focus on law and property relations (Stahl 2010; 2013); analyses of the specificities of working in music as creative labor in light of the broader process of the changing world of work (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011); musicians' trade union histories (Williamson and Cloonan 2016); and understandings of the work of musicians from an affective labor perspective (Hofman 2015). Finally, they include an analysis of the working lives, working conditions and work organization of musicians (Umney and Kretsos 2013; Banks, Ebrey, and Toynbee 2014[12]). In these accounts, musicians are often presented as (quasi-)entrepreneurs both adapting to, and even actively shaping the post-Fordist, neoliberal labor regime (Coulson 2012) and contributing to digitalization (Baym 2015; Haynes and Marshall 2018). A smaller number of accounts center on the work of behind-the-scenes workers, such as Zendel (2014) on live music technicians, Bennett (2018) on administrative workers at music companies, and Watson and Ward (2013) and Siciliano (2021) on studio workers.[13]

I also regard Ruth Finnegan's (1989) *The Hidden Musicians* as an important early study of the work of musicians at various levels on the amateur–professional scale and in multiple genres and settings outside of those usually considered in "music industry"-focused accounts, such as schools, churches, pubs or community centers. Finnegan pays as much attention to the specificities of musical practice and how these are shaped by genre conventions and values as to the economy of these musical micro-worlds. Among contemporary analyses, my work also speaks to Sally Anne Gross and George Musgrave's (2020) critical analysis of the creative labor of UK musicians and their mental wellbeing in the context of digital capitalism and precarity—not only the crucial connections the authors make between working conditions and labor organization and the wellbeing

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[12] Both of these accounts focus on jazz musicians in the UK.
[13] The growing focus on labor in music is also indicated by conferences such as *Just P(l)ay! Music as Labour* (organized in 2019 by University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna, in Reichenau an der Rax, Austria); the *Women's Work in Music* conference series (organized in 2017, 2019, and 2021 by Bangor University); the Working in Music Network (https://wim. hypotheses.org) and its conferences (2016 in Glasgow, Scotland, 2018 in Lausanne, Switzerland, and 2022 in London, Ontario, Canada [held online]); as well as the special journal issues "Music and Labour"/"Musique et Travail" (*MUSICultures*, vol. 41 no. 1, 2014) and "Back to Work" (*Volume!*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2021).

of workers, but also their highlighting of personal, even intimate (family) and professional relationships, and the complex interrelations between these two spheres in musical labor. In my own analysis, I address the blurred lines between personal and professional relationships from a feminist theoretical perspective. I, therefore, also draw on accounts that similarly assume a feminist perspective, such as Paula Wolfe's (2020) study of women working in music production in the context of digital technology, as well as other accounts of women's work in music (Armstrong 2013; Buscatto 2022; Mathias 2022).

Many of these analyses, however, even the ones most explicitly critical of the capitalist system, such as Stahl's, Siciliano's or Gross and Musgrave's work, are western-centric, leaving global economic and political dependencies and inequalities of the music and media industries largely hidden. Christina Scharff (2017) offers an illuminating comparison of the work of classical musicians between London and Berlin, which takes account of local conditions, housing, policy, cultural institutions, and conventions. Yet, as Ana Alacovska and Rosalind Gill (2019, 3) point out, despite the undeniable structural differences between the two cities, they are both "Western metropolitan creative hubs." This western-centrism mirrors the global structure of the cultural industries, dominated mostly by western multinational corporations—such as major record companies Sony Music Entertainment, Warner Music Group, and Universal Music Group, live music giant Live Nation, as well as information technology companies operating digital platforms such as YouTube or Spotify.

Cultural work in general, and work in music in particular, takes place partly in a formal, corporate organization context, which includes large multinational corporations such as major record labels, as well as small and medium-sized enterprises; it is partly organized and regulated by freelance contracts and individual entrepreneurship; and, it is also, to a significant extent, informal and partly unpaid—it is, in other words, a mixed economy (c.f. McRobbie [1998] in relation to fashion). However, the ratio among these setups varies according to countries occupying different positions in the capitalist world-system and the global music industries. The recording and live music industries are highly formalized, institutionalized, and professionalized in the global centers of music production, such as the UK, the USA, as well as Germany, Japan, or South Korea. On the Eastern European semiperiphery, in contrast, the level of formalization and professionalization is lower, and cultural production, to some extent, takes place within state institutions, or at least under some support from, and control by, the state (both nation state and local state level). This does not mean, however, that work within informal settings is not a structural feature of creative, and musical, labor in the global core;[14] nor that the state is not an important actor

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[14]   Accounts of music-focused subcultures and underground music scenes, of course, all deal with informal cultural production in some form, and reflect on the relation between subcultural or underground production and mainstream industries.

in these settings, even though state control has been less direct in the second half of the twentieth century than in the (post-)socialist Eastern European region. However, relatively less scholarly attention has been paid to the role of the state in shaping labor in music, working conditions, and the well-being of music industry workers.

A relatively small but growing number of influential studies from outside the global core, however, contribute not only non-western perspectives on the organization and specificities of working in music, but also reflections on the ways in which global economic and political relations shape production locally. From the field of ethnomusicology, Ana Hofman draws on the autonomist Marxist concept of affective labor (Hardt and Negri 2000) to make sense of the "material working conditions and work subjectivities of female professional singers" in socialist Yugoslavia (Hofman 2015, 28), interrogating both the gendered nature of musicians' work in this context and the ideological and structural lines of division between art and entertainment, which shape the materialities of their labor. Ioannis Tsioulakis (2020) explores the work of Greek instrumentalists before and after the 2008 economic crisis, focusing on power relations, subjectivities and how they are shaped by (narratives of) crises and the state. Beata M. Kowalczyk (2021) studies the transnational careers of classical musicians through multisited ethnography in Japan, France, and Poland. Other studies from within the Eastern European region include those collected in *Eastern European Music Industries and Policies after the Fall of Communism: From State Control to Free Market* (Galuszka 2021); and Ádám Havas's Bourdieusian analyses of the Hungarian jazz "diaspora" that also takes account of global networks of cultural production (2020, 2022).

CULTURAL LABOR FROM A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The analysis presented in this book draws on *world-systems analysis* (Wallerstein 1974, 2004): a theory and method based on an understanding of the capitalist world economy as a social unit established in the sixteenth century, the stability of which has been secured by such crucial institutions as the market, states, households, and social classes. The capitalist world-system is a system of dependencies defined by a social and spatial division of labor, wherein different states occupy different positions. World-systems analysis distinguishes between regions of the (hegemonic) core and those of the periphery, which are connected by historically shifting relations. Countries that are referred to as *semiperiphery*—which include the Eastern European region—simultaneously incorporate characteristics of the core and the semiperiphery, and they occupy a mediating position in the hierarchical system of the world economy (Arrighi 1990; Czirfusz et al. 2019).

The semiperiphery is characterized by a relative lack of capital and technology in comparison with the core, and it is simultaneously a territory for capital flow from the core and a source of relatively cheap labor for core countries. Such relations shaped Hungary's "dual dependency" (Böröcz 1992) under state socialism—that is, financial and economic dependency on the western capitalist core, and political and military dependency on the Soviet Union—and the rush towards "catching up," economically as well as symbolically or morally, with the (capitalist) West after the end of the state socialist regime in Hungary. The West in this relation is primarily embodied by a mythological construct of a morally "good," civilized and developed "Europe" (Böröcz 2006; Melegh 2006), against which local development can be measured. From a world-systems perspective, the post-2010 Viktor Orbán regime (termed the "System of National Cooperation" by the government) can be described as a new semiperipheral accumulation regime and a political project of local hegemony-building (Gerőcs 2021), "established in the post-2008 phase of the crisis of the global economic cycle following the second world war which has temporarily succeeded in harmonizing the satisfaction of the demands of external integration with the capitalization of a new local oligarchy" (Éber et al. 2019, 29).[15] It is a hybrid regime in the sense that it simultaneously serves western capital with (cheap) labor and strives to strengthen a national bourgeoisie (Gerőcs 2021; Scheiring 2021). The post-2010 Fidesz governments' hegemony-building has been underpinned by a right-wing conservative ideology and discourse centering the notions of national unity and pride combined with xenophobic, social Darwinist discourses channeling ethnic and class-based exclusion (Scheiring and Szombati 2020). Recognizing the power of popular culture, including popular music, in the everyday reproduction of belonging to a nation (Billig 1995), the governments have strategically shaped, and imposed increasing control over, the infrastructures of popular entertainment and cultural consumption through centralizing public service media, financing local cultural events, and funding popular forms of memory politics and spectator sports (Barna and Patakfalvi-Czirják 2024). They have also restructured the sphere of elite culture by creating or occupying art institutions and selectively supporting artists conforming to a broadly understood conservative and ethno-nationalist aesthetics (Nagy and Szarvas 2021, 219).

Accounts of cultural labor, or even the cultural industries, from a world-systems perspective, are lacking. The majority of recent global accounts of music view "globalization" from a cultural perspective, typically asking the question of whether "globalization" leads to cultural homogenization or rather hybridity or "glocalization" (Connell and Gibson 2004, 16–17). I rely on the few contemporary analyses of global relations in cultural production that are also critical of

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15   English-language translations of quotations from Hungarian original texts are my own.

global capitalism (Taylor 1997; 2015) or offer critical geographical perspectives on digitalization and music (Leyshon 2014). Moreover, my analysis is embedded in the collective work of the Budapest-based Working Group for Public Sociology "Helyzet," whose members have produced a number of works attempting to lay the foundations of a critical account of cultural production and labor based on world-systems analysis (Barna et al. 2019; Buka, Nagy, and Szarvas 2020).

Central to the experience of working in music, like work in the cultural industries in general, is the striving towards creative freedom or *autonomy* among counteracting forces. The level of creative autonomy in the form of cultural capital is also a structuring feature of the cultural field (Bourdieu 1993, [1992] 1995). As I intend to demonstrate in my analysis, the striving towards creative autonomy and the conflict between autonomy and counteracting forces is not only relevant for musicians closest to the creative product who are generally recognized in society as artists—singers, songwriters, composers, instrumentalists, producers, DJs—but also behind-the-scenes or support workers (Becker 1982) such as sound engineers, managers, or live music promoters. In western contexts, creative autonomy is predominantly interpreted as independence from the market, from a corporate and capitalistic logic that characterizes the cultural industries, which are organized for the mass production of cultural commodities (Banks 2010, 252–53). This is widely referred to as the "creativity" or "art" versus "commerce" dilemma, which concerns the perception of cultural products, their consumption, as well as cultural labor. With regard to cultural labor, the "creativity" versus "commerce" dilemma is expressed and experienced as the varying autonomy of cultural workers. A limitation arising from this western-centric perspective is the lack of attention to the role of the state as an actor—a bias that has been highlighted in studies of the creative industries in non-western countries such as China (Wang 2001; Lin 2019), where the role assumed by the state is much more direct and evident. At the same time, in an Eastern European context, due to the historical legacy of state dependence and centralized political control of the cultural sphere during the state socialist period, autonomy is more characteristically understood as autonomy from the state or political actors. Therefore, I aim to develop an empirically grounded semiperipheral model of cultural autonomy that takes account of both the market and the state, while recognizing that in the capitalist world-system, the market and the state are not separate entities (Jessop 1982).

In order to make sense of the set of relations between the industrial organization of musical labor, the state, and digital technology, I also rely on the critical perspective of the *labor process*. The theory of the labor process, originating from Marx ([1867] 1976), was developed by Harry Braverman (1974), who used it to describe deskilling and management strategies in "monopoly capitalism" employed to control labor. Andrew L. Friedman (1977), similarly in the

context of the factory, utilized the perspective to analyze what he termed "responsible autonomy" of the workers as distinct from top-down managerial strategies, pointing to the increase of self-management. Michael Burawoy (1979) viewed the economic, political, and ideological processes of the labor process as inseparable. Since the perspective combines a focus on issues of control, autonomy, and resistance on the one hand, and structural shifts in the organization of labor, some authors have employed it to analyze the relations between digital technology and creative labor: Alessandro Gandini (2018) looks at the digital platform-based "gig economy"[16] from a labor process perspective, while Michael L. Siciliano (2021) provides a compelling analysis of digital technology and control in the context of (platformized) creative labor, specifically work in a recording studio and content creation for YouTube. Although a labor process perspective proves useful for looking at the specificities, as well as lines of division, of the skills and organization of distinct segments in musical labor, my analysis will demonstrate, firstly, that in the case of digitalized creative labor, the "point of production" is often the household, unlike the workplace (factory) of the mentioned classic studies. In the household, various forms of productive and reproductive labor intersect. Secondly, that the labor process is embedded into social relations, such as the gender relations organizing labor within the household, as well as in the music industries. Thirdly, that the labor process is also embedded in the particular logic of the cultural industries, including the star system, which mitigates the necessity to manage extremely high risk (Hesmondhalgh [2002] 2019); the mechanisms of state financing and control; or the necessity of networking in the establishing and maintenance of professional careers.

A FEMINIST APPROACH TO MUSICAL LABOR ON THE SEMIPERIPHERY

A distinctive characteristic of the semiperiphery is a specific, historically conditioned relation between wage labor and informal labor—that is, labor that contributes to capital accumulation, but is embedded into relations outside of the contract-based system of wage labor (Czirfusz et al. 2019). Even though informal labor, which includes, but is not restricted to, unpaid reproductive labor performed and organized in the sphere of the household, is a fundamental element of capitalist accumulation in the global core, its weight has historically been greater on the semiperiphery (as on the periphery), making it distinct from

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[16] Gandini defines the gig economy "the establishment of a capital–labor relationship between a worker and a digital platform, that mediates workers' supply and consumer or professional demand for the completion of a small task or 'gig' and operates at once as a market intermediary and a 'shadow employer' (Friedman, 2014)" (Gandini 2018, 1040).

the core regions. In Hungary's recent socialist and postsocialist history, informal labor has also included not only unpaid reproductive labor, but also productive labor known as the "second economy" (e.g., Böröcz 1989)—homesteading as well as a multitude of different home-based small entrepreneurship, which spread in the 1980s and continued after the end of state socialism (Henshall Momsen 2002). The combination of formal wage labor, informal paid labor and informal, unpaid domestic labor has been organized in what Wilma A. Dunaway (2012), similarly from a world-systems perspective, has called "semiproletarian households." An important focus of this book is exploring the embeddedness of music making in Hungary into such home-based structures and a specific Eastern European legacy of small entrepreneurialism.

To understand the ways in which musical labor is organized in these settings, my analysis combines a critical feminist theoretical perspective, informed by Marxist and socialist feminist accounts (Dalla Costa and James 1972; Federici 2004, 2012) highlighting the invisible contribution of household-based domestic or reproductive labor—mainly housework and care work—done predominantly by women, to the capitalist economy, with world-systems analysis—both perspectives so far largely missing from the study of musical labor and gender relations in the production of music. In particular, I rely on the work of scholars whose work has been informed by both Marxist feminism and world-systems analysis, such as Claudia von Werlhof (1983, 1984) and Wilma A. Dunaway (2012, 2014). From a historical and world-systems perspective, von Werlhof and Dunaway have both described proletarianization—the extension of wage labor—and *housewifization* (Mies 1986) as parallel, complementary economic and social processes, in order to highlight the structural function of the invisible labor performed in the household in maintaining the capitalist system. I explicitly draw on the Marxist and socialist feminist theoretical tradition to understand how the *rendering invisible* is related to a gender division of labor, and a historical construction of the "public" sphere in capitalism as the sphere of productive wage labor—which excludes both reproductive labor and various forms of informal labor, including creative labor. I view gender as historically "integral to the organization of work and to social production" in capitalism (West 1990, 244), first and foremost in the sense that "the whole system of 'standard employment' rested on the sprawling foundation of unwaged labor in the home" (Ross 2009, 9). Labor within the household is regulated through a patriarchal social order, which is reinforced through culture: through gender roles and constructions of masculinity (associated with wage labor and the public sphere) and femininity (associated with unpaid household labor and the private sphere). Digitalization, moreover, has made available technological tools for cultural production and consumption—the production and consumption of cultural commodities— within the space of the home, with the use of household resources and labor.

On the one hand, (digital) technology, as argued in the first part of this chapter, has often been connected to the notion of democratization in terms of providing unprecedented access to culture and cultural production. This includes the participation of women who had partly been excluded or discouraged from many forms of music making, due, for instance, to the male-centeredness of rock culture (Cohen 1997; Bayton 1998; Leonard 2007). At the same time, the social and economic sphere of the household and its gender-based division of labor complicates such optimistic narratives. My empirically based analysis of musical labor embedded into the domestic sphere and its gender relations therefore also draws on studies that interrogate the relation between digitalization and domestic or reproductive labor (Huws 2018, 2019), and specifically digital technology and housewifization (Faludi and Crosby 2021, 2022).

Although housewifized labor has been described as "flexible, atypical, devalued and unprotected" (Praznik 2021, 36; see also Dalla Costa and James 1972; Federici 1975; Mies 1986), in the system of global capitalism, it is in fact no less typical than the assembly line, although the ratio of such labor has historically been higher outside of the global core. This perspective helps to place western-centric narratives that identify the emergence of home-based, low-status, "feminized" self-employed (creative) workers as a new trend (e.g., Taylor 2015) into a broader context. In Eastern Europe, instead, we can identify the historically continuous significance of the contribution of such informal labor to households' subsistence as well as the economy in general, including cultural production.

The household, moreover, as world-systems-based analyses have shown (Smith and Wallerstein 1984; Rosas 2002; Dunaway 2012), is also the sphere absorbing the damage caused by economic crises. Due to the uneven global division of labor, this effect is stronger in semiperipheral economies. "[Semiproletarian] [h]ouseholds juggle an ever-widening work portfolio, in order to have a security net" (Dunaway 2012, 117) for times of economic hardship, which, for workers, often results in loss of waged work and income. In such cases, the "work portfolio" of the household is reorganized to suit the changing circumstances, often resulting in an even more severe (self-)exploitation of the housewife (115–19). This process was evident in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, an economic and social crisis which was combined with a partly temporary and a forced move towards the domestic space for large segments of the population globally, a process directly impacting music industry workers in Hungary. As we will see, the crisis situation indeed typically resulted in having to reorganize household labor portfolios and divisions of labor, paid and unpaid, formal and informal.

In my analysis, I thus view the household as the locus of informal and unpaid reproductive labor, as well as paid or unpaid creative labor, which is combined with creative labor in more public and/or formalized settings as the production of musical commodities (in the form of live or recorded music).

In addition, I explore how unpaid and largely invisible reproductive labor forms part of, or intersects with, creative labor through the concept of *emotional labor*. The significance of so-called **"affective labor"** has been emphasized in relation to creative labor, especially by theorists belonging to the autonomist Marxist tradition: Hardt and Negri (2000) name affective labor as one form of "immaterial labor," becoming increasingly dominant, according to the authors, in the world of work in the present era. Hardt and Negri's description of affective labor as "'labour in a bodily mode' that involves human contact and interaction and, crucially, the creation, production and manipulation of affect" (292) allows, according to Katariina Mäkinen, "the recognition of how capital harnesses social relations and affective intensities also outside or beyond the context of waged employment" (Mäkinen 2021, 2967). The autonomist formulation of affective labor, however, fails to acknowledge the gender relations into which such labor has historically been embedded, and therefore the gendered inequalities structuring the performance and recognition of affective labor (McRobbie 2011). It thus also ignores, as Leopoldina Fortunati (2007), Kathi Weeks (2007) or Kylie Jarrett (2016, 14–19) emphasize, the above-mentioned Marxist feminists' theorization of invisible labor, including affective, performed in the household, as a fundamental condition of the capitalist economy and society.[17] Attentive to this feminist critique, I draw more directly on Arlie R. Hochschild's earlier theorization of the concept of "emotional labor" as "work that requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" within the context of paid work in the capitalist economy; a "kind of labor [that] calls on a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality" (Hochschild 1983, 7). This concept is helpful for analyzing divisions of labor and inequalities in working in music from a gender perspective—ultimately, the participation, roles and rewards, both symbolic and material, of women and men in the music economy. The theory of emotional labor may also serve to highlight continuities between women's social roles rooted in the household and the demands placed on them in the formal world of work. Although Hochschild defines emotional labor within a wage labor context, I argue that it is also revealing in a creative labor context where formal and informal, paid and unpaid labor mix in complex ways. I explore the ways in which emotional labor is integrated into the labor of musicians and music industry workers, as indicated by a small number of previous studies (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2008; Watson and Ward 2013; Pettinger 2015).

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[17]   This omission of the gender aspect occurs despite the fact that the Marxist feminist critique originated in the same Italian autonomist "workerist" (*operaismo*) movement wherein Hardt and Negri's work is rooted.

Aims, Methods, and Book Structure

In the following, I summarize the most important ways in which I hope to contribute to the study of cultural work, as well as music industry studies, with this book. First, I propose a new model of cultural autonomy informed by an epistemology rooted in the Eastern European semiperiphery, which takes account of the relationship of music industry workers and institutions to both the market and the state (chapters 1–2). I develop this empirically grounded model through the study of relations of dependency in Hungarian popular music, based on the experiences of workers, at a time of increasing state incorporation and control through cultural and media policy under the post-2010 Fidesz-led governments, as well as an ongoing transformation of the music industries through digitalization. Both processes, as I will show, were further enhanced by the pandemic crisis.

For this first part of the analysis, I make use of individual interviews, data from group sessions, relevant industry documents, reports, sound or video recordings of industry events such as roundtable discussions, as well as media content (including social media), systematically collected throughout the given time period. I conducted 39 semi-structured interviews (26 in person and 13 online due to COVID-19 restrictions), the majority (35) of these between 2018–2020.[18] These interviews addressed the experiences and working conditions of musicians and other music industry workers earning at least part of their living in a variety of popular music genres in Hungary, and their views of the structure of the Hungarian music industries, including internal power relations (details of the interviewed workers' primary professions, as well as the genres and styles in which the musicians were active are given in Appendix 1, along with some demographic data). The boundary between "amateur" and "professional," as Finnegan (1989, 12–18) observes, is often notoriously difficult to determine in the case of musicians, and this is especially true for the Eastern European semiperiphery, where, musicians often rely on a whole portfolio of jobs in order to earn a living while also "doing what they love"—hence the minimal criteria (earning at least part of their living through music).

Most existing works on cultural or musical labor, including those cited in the previous sections, rely on interviews and/or ethnographic fieldwork. In the research forming the basis of this account, we complemented the semi-structured interviews with other, in this context, less frequently employed qualitative

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[18] I conducted 10 out of the 35 interviews together with my co-researcher Ágnes Blaskó, and 3 with my co-researcher Andrea Rajkó. In addition to the 35 planned interviews, an additional interview was conducted by a member of the newly formed musicians' union Alaphang in 2021, and I conducted, together with research assistant Máté Horváth, three more interviews with artist managers in 2022.

methods tailored to the research questions. To analyze industry power relations and workers' perceptions and experiences of autonomy, control, and dependence, besides the mentioned interviews, I also rely on sociodrama groups, which were co-designed by Ágnes Blaskó and myself and led by Ágnes Blaskó and dramatist Krisztina Galgóczi. Out of eleven drama groups in total, chapter 2 relies on 6 (dramas 1–5 and 8; for details on each session, including the dates, the profile of the participants and the primary thematic focus, see Appendix 3). These sessions, conducted by two drama leaders with groups of three to six participants comprising, in every case, music industry workers in various roles (see Appendix 3 for details), addressed power relations, autonomy and dependencies from the perspective of various music industry workers. After the second sociodrama group session, conducted in February 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic created an unexpected situation, both in terms of the accessibility of workers and the crisis they suddenly faced. We decided to continue conducting the sessions in an online form. The main research focus did not change, but the particularities of the method had to be adjusted to the lockdown situation (e.g., instead of using physical objects in the play phase, the groups used an online interactive whiteboard surface). The thematic focal points of the sociodrama events were also adjusted according to the main concerns, questions, and needs of participants that arose in the crisis, directly affecting their work: thus, the pandemic-time drama sessions revolved around questions of power, autonomy, and control as tied to the question of survival in, and of, the Hungarian music industries, individually and collectively.

We applied sociodrama as a qualitative research method based on Jacob L. Moreno's approach (Moreno 1946; Blaskó et al. 2021; Blaskó 2024) in order to generate collective knowledge about the experiences of music industry workers. While psychodrama is primarily a "mental health support technique" (Blaskó 2024, 7) and is more individual-focused, sociodrama is based on group issues "and offers the possibility to understand other issue-related agents' perspectives, the produced knowledge and the proposals for a feasible and achievable change, in a protected environment" (Blaskó 2024, 2). During sociodrama sessions, the group formulates problematic issues or questions that concern them—in this case, as music industry workers—together with the researchers, within the framework of the broader thematic focus of the group (which is aligned with the research questions) (Browne 2006; Minkin 2016). Participants of the group then develop these issues through dramatic enactments led by the dramatists.[19]

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[19] Sociodrama is often used as (participatory) action research, a collaborative method that regards participants as co-researchers and sets "the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern" (Bradbury 2015, 1) as a goal. Here, however, even if the drama partly rested on problems defined by, and thus familiar to, the participants, enabling collective recognition and reflection, participants mainly acted as informants similarly to more conventional qualitative research settings.

Sociodrama was therefore especially suited to a research context where I had predefined research questions but also a rapidly shifting field, with the emergence of the pandemic crisis and political changes on the national level. Each drama session—lasting approximately three hours—included the following phases, which are standard in sociodrama: a warm-up phase, a resulting theme exploration, an enactment phase and lastly, integration (Browne 2006; Karp 1996; Minkin 2016; Blaskó 2024). The warm-up session served as a space for the participants to get to know one another and discuss issues currently relevant to them. At the end of the warm-up, the participants analyzed the first phase together with the drama leaders with the goal of finding themes that were not only interesting from the point of the research objectives, but also resonated with the participants' experiences and concerns. After finding the main issue, during the enactment phase, participants role-played along with the use of sociodramatic techniques that enable the leaders to stop the situation at strategic points to help participants temporarily step out of their roles and reflect on the situation; aid other participants to step in the given role; and, encourage participants to switch roles or verbalize various, often conflicting, inner voices potentially mobilized in the scenes. Role-playing enables the observation of behaviors in action, in addition to enabling participants to relive and recreate emotions they experience in everyday action. By playing roles distinct from their regular ones (for instance, stepping into the role of a music journalist as a musician, or into the role of a musician as an artist manager), the positions of others can be experienced and understood, not only on an individual, but also on a collective level. As a final step, participants exited their roles and engaged in verbal reflection in the integration phase, which enables the group to affirm or "correct" certain parts in the enactment phase by placing them in the perceived reality of their daily lives. Each of these phases was included in the data analysis.

The analysis of relations of dependency, control, and autonomy outlines a specific, dominant segment of popular music. This segment, characterized by a broad, yet definable pop-rock aesthetic, is dominant in the sense that it is constructed and represented as the "music industry" by both music industry workers, in particular the key gatekeepers, namely live music promoters, as well as through cultural policy. Beyond this empirical result, however, the model also aims to be generalizable, firstly, as an alternative to accounts of cultural production and autonomy situated in the global core (e.g., Taylor and Littleton 2008; Banks 2010), which often lack an engagement with the relationship to the state; and secondly, as an alternative to Eastern European accounts that, on the contrary, tend to define autonomy in relation to the state in a dominantly national context, without a critical view of market relations and/or without accounting for global-level dependencies in the capitalist world-system (e.g., Piotrowski 2007; Oktatói Hálózat 2020).

The second part of the analysis, relying primarily on individual interviews, utilizes a labor process perspective (Marx 1976 [1867]; Braverman 1974; Burawoy 1979; Friedman 1977; Ursell 2000; Gandini 2018; Siciliano 2021) to define and analyze another specific segment, namely the broadly defined hip hop music world (including a variety of styles such as rap, trap, R'n'B, and some forms of pop) based on the working patterns of and time-use of workers, and compare it to the dominant pop-rock segment. The hip hop world, in contrast to pop-rock, is less visible from the perspective of either cultural policy or industry organizations, and also less governed by the star system. At the same time, the musicians, I argue, are more directly integrated into global digital capitalism through their labor. To existing critiques of platformized cultural labor, my analysis contributes a view of such labor's social embeddedness, in particular a perspective on how platformized labor is shaped by gender relations.

A third contribution of analysis, primarily highlighted in chapters 4 and 5, concerns the ways in which informality permeates and governs power relations and the allocations of resources. My analysis of informality, while acknowledging the crucial aspect of networking as a resource (which is also observed in western accounts of creative labor, e.g., Wittel 2001), also goes beyond this, to uncover the ways in which the informal contribution of labor and resources of the household, as well as the network of fans, friends and relatives around music acts, contributes to musical careers, and ultimately the musical economy. In chapter 4, I explore the intertwining of domestic (reproductive) and creative labor in the household. I view the contribution of the household in a semiperipheral context where wage labor penetrates to a lesser extent compared to the global core, and draw parallels with the specific Hungarian history of informal production—the "second economy"—emerging in the Kádár era.

 Fourth, I offer a feminist analysis of labor in music that moves beyond issues of representation (i.e., inequality in terms of the proportion of male versus female musicians or industry workers) through highlighting, with the help theories of the household and domestic labor that combine a Marxist feminist approach with world-systems analysis (e.g., Dunaway 2012), the ways in which the above-mentioned informal contributions of the household are structured by domestic gender relations (chapter 4). This focus also helps to critique techno-optimistic accounts of (home-based) digital technology and women's music production formulated primarily on the basis of access. I argue that the study of digitalization and musical entrepreneurship has a lot to gain from a focus on gender relations within the household, where most of this entrepreneurship is located.

In addition to providing an analytic angle, the feminist perspective also informed my methodology: for chapters 4 and 5, besides individual interviews, I make use of qualitative time-use interviews designed to capture a level of

empirical detail on the organization and experience of work and life, divisions of labor, use of space, personal relations, economics, feelings, and attitudes that is arguably missing from existing accounts on musical labor. The qualitative time-use interviews, specifically developed for this research, were loosely based on the quantitative time-use research method, which has been effectively utilized in sociology to study gendered patterns of time-use and the invisible work of women (e.g., Gershuny and Robinson 1988; Sebők 2017) (see Appendix 2 for a sample of the recorded data). We conducted 33 time-use interviews with 16 female and 17 male participants. With 12 of these participants, we also conducted semi-structured interviews. Women were purposefully over-represented, as I aimed to foreground women's experiences in a male-dominated industry (Appendix 2 indicates more information on the interview subjects). This method enabled me to reveal the activity structure of workers, the blurring boundaries between work and life, and—corresponding to the feminist analytical lens— the gendered patterns of time use, along with participants' attitudes to their work, the structure of their relationships (professional and/or private), and their working and living conditions.

Fifth, I further contribute to understanding gender and labor in music by offering, with the help of data from time-use interviews and sociodrama, a detailed and systematic analysis of emotional labor (Hochschild 1983) in music (chapter 5). I look, in particular, at the role of friendship and romantic partnership in networking and the access and allocation of resources, and identify the specific role of what I term "amateur helpers" in musical careers. This query highlights gender divisions of labor and forms of (self-)exploitation that tend to remain invisible.

Throughout the chapters, I also refer to data from focus group interviews co-designed by Andrea Rajkó and myself and conducted by Andrea Rajkó: ten focus groups were conducted during the autumn and winter months of 2020 (and early 2021), partly online and partly offline, covering similar roles and professions as the individual interviews and the sociodrama groups, including homogenous as well as heterogeneous groups regarding industry role/profession, gender, and location (Budapest or other towns) (for details of the organization of each group, see Appendix 4). The groups were aimed at exploring music industry workers' perceptions of the structure and hierarchical system of Hungarian popular music and the music industries, their working conditions and lifestyles, and their perception of gender relations in the Hungarian music industries.[20] In addition, in chapters 3 and 5, I rely on ethnographic observation of an offline (the shooting of a music video) and an online event (a gig live-streamed from a musicians' home during the COVID-19 lockdown period in

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[20]   Although I rely on data from the focus groups, their systematic analysis does not form part of this book.

2020). I also observed the social media activity for selected (mostly hip hop) musicians for a period of at least six months, which inform my analysis of these musicians' work in chapter 5.

In the final chapter (chapter 6), I provide an overview of the opportunities for solidarity and the collective organizing of music industry workers during the time of the COVID-19 crisis and beyond, and the limitations of these.

Creative Autonomy, the State, and Global Capitalism

Theories of Creative Autonomy in the Cultural Industries

Discourses of creative autonomy have been central to thinking about how artists and various other cultural workers navigate the social, economic, and political environment of their work. This chapter explores how creative autonomy has been understood and problematized among creative workers in general, as well as musicians and music industry workers in particular.[1] The context in which dimensions of autonomy—artistic, professional, existential—are experienced and articulated is an economy that is highly complex in terms of incorporating informal practices; independent and even subcultural (Hodkinson 2002, 109–29) production; as well as corporate, profit-driven commercial production—in other words, it is a mixed economy (McRobbie 1998). I begin with an overview of some of the dominant theoretical approaches to autonomy that have been used to describe the particularities of creative or cultural labor in the capitalist system and, in some cases, to problematize the industrialization of cultural production.

References to creative autonomy have been central to discussions of labor in the cultural industries. However, creative autonomy is far from a simple and objectively definable concept. Apart from the fact that it refers partly to aesthetic principles, and partly to individual "self-expression," autonomy discourses themselves are deeply embedded into social, economic, and political relations. This underlines the necessity of a perspective that is both historically and geographically grounded. In this section, I outline some of the dominant concepts and interpretations of autonomy in the cultural industries in studies that both focus on and are produced in countries of the global core, particularly the UK and the USA, which continue to dominate this literature. However, I complement these with accounts focusing on countries of the global semiperiphery and periphery (although in part also produced by researchers based in universities in the

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[1] Some of the arguments presented here were first published, albeit as a shorter summary, in Barna and Blaskó (2021).

USA or Western Europe). Even though my main focus here is the perspective of labor, a critical exploration of discourses around autonomy and dependence is also necessitated by the special role cultural workers fulfill in (re)producing and questioning ideologies about social and political relations through the widely disseminated cultural texts they produce—as Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011, 164–66) emphasize in relation to media workers, cultural creators possess symbolic power in society.

ART VERSUS COMMERCE: CONCEPTIONS OF CULTURAL AUTONOMY IN THE GLOBAL CORE

Given the predominance in cultural or creative labor literature of works focusing on countries of the global core, I begin with a reflection on conceptions of autonomy in the cultural industries in this corpus, also highlighting works looking at the music industries in particular. Mark Banks (2010) provides a good starting point as he proposes a synthesis of different theoretical strands to develop his own notion of "negotiated autonomy." Banks argues that cultural work is often assumed to be more "inherently autonomous" than other types of work, and identifies "three prominent social science critiques which have sought to account for either the decline or diminution of autonomy of cultural work," namely those associated with the work of Theodor Adorno, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu (Banks 2010, 252).

Banks emphasizes that in western economies, cultural or creative autonomy is generally interpreted as independence from the capitalist market (Banks 2010, 252–53), which is expressed by the distance that is kept, or lack thereof, from a commercial and corporate logic that is assumed to characterize the industrial production of culture and the demands and constraints of a (consumer) capitalist society. In other words, at the core of the definition of autonomy is a definition against the competition-based, profit-seeking principle of the industrial production of culture that is understood to constrain creative and cultural freedom. This is widely known and referred to as the *art* versus *commerce* dilemma (e.g., Murdock 2003; Banks 2007, 6–7; Banks 2010), or "conflicts around money and creative work" (Taylor and Littleton 2008, 276), which concern the cultural product, its consumption, and cultural labor—and thus the autonomy of the (cultural) worker. Western theories of cultural or creative autonomy have focused on each of these three aspects, although the focus has shifted. Concerning the *worker*, the dilemma has been traced back to a Romantic conception of the artist, for whom art is conceived as a calling independent from profit concerns. According to Banks, the artistic freedom concept of Romanticism demanded freedom not only from the new commercial society of the nineteenth century,

but also "its incipient bourgeois morality" (Banks 2010, 253).[2] This points to the connection of the notion of artistic genius to class formations taking place within the global core during the nineteenth century. Anna Szemere refers to this as the cultural or aesthetic dimension of autonomy, which she contrasts with the political-economic dimension, a more "everyday idea of cultural freedom and producers' control over the creative process" (Szemere 2001, 8–9). Indeed, even though it regards the artist, this nineteenth-century conception of autonomy was attached to the autonomy of art rather than the autonomy of work or the worker and, due to its bourgeois basis, was disconnected from the discourse of the workers' movements of the nineteenth century (despite the fact that cultural workers, including musicians, began organizing at this time in various countries [e.g., Williamson and Cloonan 2016]). It was only the critique of mass culture formulated by the Frankfurt School, combined with a theorization of the "culture industry" (Adorno and Horkheimer [1944] 1999), that coherently linked a critique of, firstly, *labor within the cultural industries*—mass production of culture effectively transforming the artist into an assembly line worker—with a critique of, secondly, the *cultural product*—homogenous, unsophisticated mass culture produced through standardized production processes—and thirdly, its *consumption*—an audience, and a society, rendered passive and prone to desensitization and propaganda. The formulation of these aspects of critique, of course, accompanied the emergence of electronic media and the industrialization of cultural production, distribution and consumption on truly mass—national and international—scales, crossing social classes. And even though the latter two aspects of Adorno's (and Horkheimer's) work, the critique of the popular cultural product and its audience (close to Szemere's aesthetic dimension), have since perhaps received more criticism in cultural studies than any other theoretical concept, his arguments regarding cultural labor (closer to the political economic dimension) have received less attention.[3]

In terms of the autonomy of labor in the music industries in particular, the negative ring of "selling out," of succumbing to the lures of profit to the detriment of creative freedom, has been documented to structure the careers of not only musicians but also, for instance, record label owners and employees. Hesmondhalgh (1999) demonstrates this in his analysis of One Little Indian, a British independent record label formed within the anarcho-punk scene in 1985. The challenges of running a business while maintaining the values of the anarchist scene, as Hesmondhalgh shows, are experienced and negotiated by those

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[2] See also Elizabeth Wilson's (1999) account of bohemian culture as a historical study of this stance.

[3] As an exception, McGuigan (2004) draws on Adorno in the contemporary period to critique cultural production and labor by dissecting this labor's embeddedness into the neoliberal capitalist economy, thus also rendering autonomy subordinate to corporate logic.

at the label in their everyday work: "Another problem is that of negotiating between the constant threat of bankruptcy and a strong resistance to 'selling-out' to majors, or even to 'straight' companies (those supposedly motivated neither by love of music, nor by politics)" (42). "For many anarcho-punks," he argues, "combining political beliefs directly opposed to the accumulation of wealth and status, with a job involving frequent contact with conspicuous wealth and consumption, proved too much, and they left the industry" (42).

In their introduction to the "Autonomy and Creative Labour" special issue of the *Journal for Cultural Research*, Holt and Lapenta refer to autonomy as independence in terms of both employment conditions in the cultural industries (Holt and Lapenta 2010, 225) and autonomous "subjectivity in self-realization" (Holt and Lapenta 2010, 226). The latter definition refers to the inner-self dimension of the worker, where the critical theories of Foucault (1980) and Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Passeron [1970] 1991) are particularly valuable, as they focus on the internalization and psychological reproduction of social structures and power hierarchies. Neo-Foucauldian approaches such as Angela McRobbie's (2002a, 2016), which Banks also highlights (2010, 256–57), focus on the mechanisms of (self-)governance through which the logic of the (neoliberal) capitalist cultural industries are internalized and readily reproduced by cultural workers through ideologies of (individual) creativity and techniques of self-management. Autonomy in this sense becomes a "false freedom" insomuch as the demands of neoliberal capitalism, such as the flexibilization of (typically freelance) work, are welcomed as inherent to the thriving of creativity. This is perhaps most obvious in the "de-differentiation" of work and non-work environments (Banks 2010, 256) on the basis that work is pleasure—this is also often referred to as the "do what you love" (DWYL) ideology (e.g., Duffy 2016, 441; Sandoval 2018). In this perspective, the constitution of neoliberal—creative— subjectivities in itself contributes to the reinforcing of a capitalist order, in which "creativity" itself, as argued in my introductory chapter, has become a "doctrine" in western societies (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011, 2–6); one that is based on this elective affinity between the neoliberal flexible worker and the works/lives of artists—or what Boltanski and Chiapello ([1999] 2005) refer to as "the new spirit of capitalism."

Bourdieu's theory of the habitus as "socially constituted cognitive capacity" (Bourdieu 1986, 27; Bourdieu and Passeron [1970] 1991), automated individual practices, and dispositions that manifest internalized social structures, also holds potential in explaining the aforementioned affinity between neoliberal capitalism and the construction of (creative) subjectivities (Leyva 2019). Bourdieu's (1980) work, however, as Banks highlights, also shows that it is cultural workers' own status-seeking that undermines their freedom, since according to the already-mentioned Romantic conception of the autonomy of art, the distance

kept from the economic logic—and the articulation of this distance (an "inverted economic world" [Bourdieu 1993, 216])—tends to serve as a successful strategy in the field of cultural production. Thus, paradoxically, artistic "disinterestedness" may attract economic rewards (258).[4] In other words, cultural autonomy as a "pose" (Banks 2010, 258) is an integral form of cultural capital in the cultural industries—or a "subcultural" one (Thornton 1995) in the context of cultural forms in some way associated with alterity, such as subcultural styles. David Arditi reiterates this claim in his Marxian analysis of labor in the recording industry:

> An artist's autonomy from the system of capital is dependent on the artist's access to capital; this is especially true for artists who have little economic capital, as they must work at the service of capital (i.e., create mass culture), whereas a wealthy artist can work more autonomously (Bourdieu 1993, 67–68). Remarkably, this reverses the rhetoric of cultural struggle. For instance, an artist who rejects "selling out" and capitalism in order to create avant-garde art has to be in a relative position of dominance and affluence within the field of cultural production because he or she needs to possess economic capital in order to survive. On the other hand, an artist lacking economic capital will be more willing to produce mass art in order to make ends meet. These two kinds of artists end up playing contradictory roles in terms of their status within the class field. Part of the trick to avant-garde art, however, is that the initial rejection of capitalism allows avant-garde material to become more valuable over time. (Arditi 2015, 75)

From a Bourdieusian perspective, speaking of autonomy in the cultural industries thus requires clarification. Bourdieu's theorization of art as a field with its specific logic, its own mechanisms and principles of classification and legitimation, where positions and relations are determined by specific forms of capital, incorporates an understanding of autonomy that encompasses artistic production as well as consumption. In *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, through the example of the nineteenth-century French literary field, Bourdieu ([1992] 1995) places actors within the field of cultural production in various positions between an autonomous and a heteronomous pole. The autonomy of the (sub)field itself is based on its relation to the economic and political fields: "[t]he degree of autonomy of a field of cultural production," argues Bourdieu, "is revealed to the extent that the principle of external hierarchization there is subordinated to the principle of internal hierarchization" (Bourdieu [1992]

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[4]   In *The Rules of Art*, besides potential economic profits, Bourdieu ([1992] 1995, 214–77) also emphasizes the economic conditions of this "disinterestedness"—the fact that creative autonomy free from the dictates of making a living, and free to engage in risky forms ("intellectual and artistic avant-garde") is a privilege of those already in possession of adequate economic and social capital that provides a secure background from which to experiment.

1995, 217). In the "subfield of restricted production," internal hierarchization prevails; that is, success and recognition—symbolic capital—is dependent on acknowledgement from peers "and only them" (217). In the "subfield of large-scale production," on the other hand, success is defined by commercial success or acknowledgement by the public (and recognition in the form of prizes, and so forth), yet cultural workers ("producers" in Bourdieu's term) occupying such positions face symbolic exclusion by actors within the former subfield (ibid.).

In my understanding, the logic behind Banks' central argument in the cited work differs from that of Bourdieu's field theory. Banks states

> that cultural work *is* intrinsically autonomous to the extent that labor autonomy not only serves as (1) a foundational normative principle for the artistic, creative or aesthetic practices that underpin cultural work, but is also (2) a structural precondition for effective capitalist cultural production. (Banks 2010, 252)

The first justification seems less fruitful since—unlike Bourdieu—it fails to reveal anything about the power relations among cultural workers. The second argument, however, is a crucial contribution to understanding the dialectic of autonomy and control in the industrialized production of culture, including, or perhaps especially, music. The statement implies that "capital has no particular interest in fully divesting cultural workers of their autonomy, for to do so would undermine the very basis of the value generated in cultural production" (Banks 2010, 260). To phrase it more pessimistically, creative autonomy may, to a significant extent, be contained by capital. As Banks acknowledges, Jason Toynbee (2000, 264–65) develops the notion of "institutional autonomy" on a similar grounding to highlight the specific conditions of autonomy in the pop music industry and the dynamic between small-scale creation and a mass-based industry. Toynbee defines institutional autonomy as

> a tendency for the music industries to cede control of production (writing, performing, realizing) to musicians themselves; towards spatially dispersed production in small units (such as the rock group in concert tour or recording studio); and for a strong continuity between consumption and production (often within an over-arching subculture). Such institutional autonomy from corporate control establishes the terms and conditions for the creative agency of musicians. It also sets limits on what they can do. (Toynbee 2000, 1)

Even though Toynbee does not make this comparison, a parallel may be drawn between "institutional autonomy" in the music industries and "responsible autonomy" in the context of the factory as defined by Friedman: "a strategy [that] attempts to harness the adaptability of labor power by giving workers leeway and encouraging them to adapt to changing situations in a manner beneficial to

the firm," through top managers giving "workers status, authority and responsibility" (Friedman 1977, 78). Moreover, the neoliberal reorganization of labor hinges on the increase of such autonomy.

In "On Popular Music," when explaining the process of the standardization of cultural production, Adorno himself also draws attention to what is essentially the mixed economy of music in the following way:

> Though all industrial mass production necessarily eventuates in standardization, the production of popular music can be called "industrial" only in its promotion and distribution, whereas the act of producing a song-hit still remains in a handicraft stage. The production of popular music is highly centralized in its economic organization, but still "individualistic" in its social mode of production. (Adorno [1941] 2002, 443)

Unlike either Adorno or Bourdieu, however, Banks also highlights workers' everyday experiences and practices resulting from this mixed economic structure when defining the concept of "negotiated autonomy" as the "more routine conditions of cultural production where workers find themselves engaged in a quotidian 'struggle within' to try to mediate, manage or reconcile the varied opportunities and constraints of the art–commerce relation" (2010, 262). In *Working Musicians: Labor and Creativity in Film and Television Production*, Taylor (2023), moreover, recognizes that workers' degree of autonomy and control serves to structure hierarchies in cultural (musical) production. Their hierarchy is partly manifest through a formalized division of labor, such as above- and below-the-line workers in the film and television industries, which profoundly shapes the work of film music composers and producers (Taylor 2023, 22).

Cultural producers and consumers in subcultural segments, as shown by Sarah Thornton (1995) in her analysis of early 1990s' UK club culture, employ distinctions that follow similar mechanisms of classification and legitimation, and therefore inclusion and exclusion, to the subfields of restrictive production analyzed by Bourdieu. Her work, thus, demonstrated that autonomy functions as symbolic capital not only in (sub)fields that would be defined as high art but also in those on the peripheries of pop culture production. Paul Hodkinson (2002) also provided an account of the "relatively autonomous" infrastructures of subcultures—in his case, Goth—enabling subcultural production, consumption, and communication. Similarly, a rich body of literature explores cultural, in particular, music scenes centered around local, often characteristically "DIY" modes of creation and infrastructure, underpinned by aesthetics and ethics of an anti-professionalism that stands in for anti-commercialism (e.g., Bennett and Guerra 2018), including the new ways enabled by digital technology for such scenes to function in a relatively autonomous manner (e.g., Reia 2014; Uzal 2020). Toynbee, however, describes such local scenes in a way that is less culturally celebratory, highlighting their economic function as "proto-markets," and,

thus, as reservoirs of creative labor that feed into the formal, corporate music industries (Toynbee 2000, 25–32). Autonomy in this sense is conceived on an organizational, systemic level: as the existence of a relatively independent economic segment, which changes culturally (with the emergence of new scenes or new subcultural trends), but is nevertheless constantly in the process of incorporation. This level and this kind of flexibility complements the mentioned "institutional autonomy" on the level of the worker.

CREATIVE AUTONOMY AND THE MISSING STATE

Besides these crucial observations and focal points, two main limitations arise from the position of these works as knowledge produced within the core states of the capitalist world-system. Firstly, there is typically a lack of attention paid to the role of the state in shaping autonomy and control in labor in the cultural industries; the relationship between the state and the market; and, the role of the government and other political actors in the cultural industries. Secondly, there is a predominant, although implicit, national focus—without theorizing the nation state as a context—which limits the extent to which concepts of cultural autonomy take account of the global power hierarchies shaping the cultural industries.

   With regard to the first aspect, perhaps unsurprisingly, it is research focused on the creative economies of non-western countries such as China, where the state exercises a much more direct controlling role in cultural production, that draws attention to this theoretical bias. As Michael Keane puts it: "Most international depictions relate to market economies where the hand of government is at a distance. In a country [such as China] where freedom of expression is constrained by politics, the term *precarious creativity* implies something quite different. The hand of government is very visible" (Keane 2016, 219).[5] In an earlier study titled "The state question in Chinese popular cultural studies," Jing Wang explores the relationship between popular culture, in particular, mass media, and politics in postsocialist China. Here, she similarly refers to the "erosion of the state question in scholarship on contemporary Western culture" (Wang 2001, 1).

   The "erosion of the state question" in western literature, and Keane's argumentation itself may imply that the state has been less relevant as an actor in relation to cultural autonomy in countries of the global core. I, however, would like to argue that the capitalist state (Jessop 1982) and the ways in which and

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[5]   This argument is helpful even if it is not explicitly formulated in relation to creative autonomy, but as a comment on the precarity discourse in studying creative labor.

the extent to which it reproduces the conditions for capital accumulation and a free market, or mitigates these, need to be rendered the subject of empirical analysis in both western and non-western economies. Wang argues, importantly, that focusing on the state—in her case, the Chinese state—does not equate with assuming that it "operates outside the circuit of transnational capital" (Wang 2001, 2); instead, they operate at different scales. Similarly from a perspective informed by studying creative labor in a Chinese context, Jian Lin criticizes the majority of literature on creative labor so far for, firstly, being ahistorical, secondly, having a lack concern for different socio-political contexts, and thirdly, being based in a western, neoliberal context, running "the risk of becoming either a study of 'neoliberal labor' or a sub-project of 'anti-neoliberalism'" (Lin 2018, 13–14). His analysis demonstrates that creative labor within Chinese state-owned cultural enterprises (SOCEs), operating within the context of a party state, does not fit this mold. To make sense of the autonomy of laborers in this context, he adds a third dimension to the "'art–commerce relation', thus, making it an 'art–commerce–politics relation'" (Lin 2018, 9). Lin borrows the mentioned notion of "responsible autonomy" from Friedman (1977), arguing that this relation is complicated by bureaucratic management (increasing in strictness following the anti-corruption movement initiated in 2012) in the case of Chinese SOCE creative workers, who also experience an ideological necessity to adhere to certain centrally defined values. The latter results in self-censorship and thus self-governance, while "loafing on the job"—a characteristic behavior according to the workers as a form of practicing of their autonomy—"furnishes creative individuals with possibilities to distance themselves from the expected subjectivity of 'being creative for the state'" (Lin 2018, 14). At the same time, this behavior "exemplifies the dysfunction of the self-realization discourse" (ibid.). On the other hand, the state provides "relatively generous welfare" provisions to at least some cultural workers (8), ensuring that cultural work remains an attractive perspective for young people. Keane emphasizes that "precarious creativity" assumes particular significance in the context of China in addition to the usual characteristics emphasized by western literature on the precarity of cultural workers: for instance, it extends beyond questions of employment to the skills of navigating censorship (Keane 2016, 227).[6]

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[6] In the same edited volume (Curtin and Sanson 2016), Anthony Fung (2016) covers labor in the cultural industries in China and other East Asian countries, drawing up a model of cultural labor in these states along two axes: "creative dependence" and "creativity tolerance." Based on this, he distinguishes between cultural labor in South Korea, which is characterized by a democratic, free-market environment, from those of Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam, where companies function as "'the arms' of western giants" and subcontracted jobs prevail; and lastly, China, where cultural workers are "skillful but less creative under state censorship" ("less creative" here refers to lesser creative autonomy). As a further example, in a different semiperipheral context, Panos Kompatsiaris (2014) critically employs Banks' (2010) "negotiated autonomy" notion

Consideration of the state, however, is not missing entirely from western-based studies either: some works focus on how music production is shaped by cultural policy (e.g., Homan, Cloonan, and Chattermole 2015), and some on how it is affected by the broader regulatory framework determined by the state apparatus, primarily through intellectual property and copyright legislation (e.g., Frith and Marshall 2004; Stahl 2009, 2013). Martin Cloonan (1999) helpfully summarizes the areas where the state can assert—more or less direct—influence over popular music as (1) broadcasting, (2) censorship, (3) law and copyright, (4) cultural policy, and (5) identity. Though not focusing on music, McRobbie's (1998) discussion of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme of the Margaret Thatcher-era UK and its role in the careers of young British fashion designers offers an illuminating analysis of the initiative taken by the state in shaping the conditions of creative labor and autonomy in the emerging neoliberal economic and social order of the 1980s and early 1990s. She demonstrates how the scheme offered material and legal, but also an ideological framework for neoliberal entrepreneurialism, which contributed to the creation of self-regulating and self-disciplining young creative workers. In the sphere of music, Cloonan (2004) analyses the New Deal for Musicians program introduced by the 1997 Labour government in the UK under the slogan "from welfare to work." Before the scheme, it had been unemployment benefits that enabled musicians, including such well-known bands as Oasis and Pulp, to refine their art during the early stages of their careers (Cloonan 2004, 47). Cloonan's study focuses on the scale of the nation state, but John Street (1993) looks at the role of local authorities in popular music through such means as (1) regulation, (2) finance, (3) cultural policy, and (4) industrial/economic policy. In connection with the last area, cultural clusters (e.g., Brown, O'Connor, and Cohen 2000) have been an important focus, enabling the exploration of the interrelations between urban development or regeneration, music culture, and music tourism (e.g., Cohen 2007), some of which address issues of cultural (social) participation and inequalities (Kompatsiaris 2014), even if rarely the autonomy of cultural producers directly.

Matt Stahl's Marxist analysis (e.g., Stahl 2010, 2013), focusing on the recording industry in the United States, demonstrates how legislation, particularly the laws governing employment contracts in the recording industry, favor capital accumulation. His analyses of the relations between recording artists, corporations, and the law highlight the role of the capitalist state in maintaining and actively reinforcing the conditions of capitalism and reproducing social inequalities of class, race, and gender relations (Stahl 2013, 2021), which structure the exploitation of labor in the recording industry just as in other areas. David Arditi

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in the context of post-economic crisis Greece to make sense of cultural workers' experience of a contemporary art event in the context of gentrification and global flows of capital and migration.

(2015) argues that following the emergence of the MP3 format and Napster, the pioneering free peer-to-peer music file-sharing platform, at the turn of the twenty-first century, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) "adjusted the role of the state in regulating the recorded music industry" (xxvii–xxviii) through, firstly, copyright law and secondly, Federal Communications Commission regulations. His analysis shows that in what is broadly regarded as a crucial moment of a new field of possibilities opening up with digital technology for the production, distribution, and consumption—or, defined outside an industrial logic: creation, sharing, and listening—to music, the RIAA, as a representative of corporate interest, successfully advocated for laws that placed major record labels in favorable positions, reinforcing their dominant position (xxviii, 41–69). Arditi describes a paradox, namely that recording artists are "valued for their supposed artistic autonomy, but only to the degree to which supposed autonomy sells records" (73); in effect, recording contracts take this autonomy away by assigning copyrights to the record label and ridding the artist of these, and thus of future profits, in exchange for an advance that enables the recording of an album. Copyright—a mechanism defined through law by the state (43)—essentially "separates musicians from their means of production" (45).

Such critical considerations regarding labor law and copyright law are crucial in understanding the relationship between the state, music industry corporations, and musicians. At the same time, understanding creative autonomy in Hungarian music requires an adjusted framework for a number of important reasons: firstly, Stahl's and Arditi's analyses center mainly on the recording industry (although Stahl [2013], importantly, also includes television talent contests), whereas in post-2010 Hungary, live music is the more dominant sector. Secondly, in the United States, the recording industry is highly formalized and regulated; in other words, the state, indeed, is actively shaping the industry through regulation and legislation. On the Eastern European semiperiphery, however, working relations are shaped by a wide variety of contracts, and as we will see, shifting regulations regarding sole tradership are particularly relevant. Work, in addition, is to a significant extent informal (Alacovska 2018) and incorporates various forms of work and remuneration—financial or other—not regulated by contract. Thirdly, even though, as Arditi claims (Arditi 2015, 76), creative autonomy is indeed typically associated with artists, I intend to show that it is a similarly relevant dimension of the work of behind-the-scenes music industry workers.

Creative Autonomy on the Eastern European Semiperiphery

WORKING IN POPULAR MUSIC DURING STATE SOCIALISM

Accounts focusing on postsocialist Hungary tend to emphasize that the Hungarian cultural world, including popular music, is shaped by a historical legacy of being highly state-dependent under socialism. "Entertainment," Szemere (2017, 9–11) observes, "was never neutral or innocent in the eyes of communist cultural policy," even though the extent and scope of state control shifted along with shifts in the economic and political system. Communist ideologues strictly prescribed aesthetic principles regarding composition in the early 1950s (the Rákosi era) based on central Soviet directives: for instance, the prioritization of melody was desirable as opposed to the rhythm-orientation of American jazz; harmony was supposed to be "clear and present" (as opposed to jazz "cacophony"); songs were to be optimistic in tone (as opposed to the "nervous atmosphere of American jazz"); and lyrics "sensible" and "related to contemporary life," in contrast, again, to the supposed frivolous eroticism of jazz (Tamássy 1950, 37–38, quoted in Ignácz 2017, 75). Nevertheless, the difficulty of directly translating these principles into songwriting practice left songwriters with *some* room for creativity (Ignácz 2017).

At that time, musical styles and genres, as the characterization of jazz indicates, were defined through a relatively straight category system of ideological distinction, which continued into the subsequent Kádár era, even though the system gradually incorporated "beat" (rock and roll and British Invasion) music—thus a popular contemporary Anglo-American genre—through institutions such as the national television song contest Táncdalfesztivál (Dance Song Festival). Aesthetic control was combined with means of institutional and infrastructural control, the latter two gradually increasing in weight in relation to aesthetic means in this period. Throughout the socialist era, there was a state monopoly on music production: recording, record manufacturing and publishing, as well as the primary channels for its dissemination and discursive framing, namely radio and television. The state, in addition, asserted power through direct control of live music through a permission system and (often violent) policing of events. Even though the existence of censorship was never officially acknowledged (Csatári 2007, 77), various forms of censorship were practiced, including the mentioned strategic control of opportunities for recording and performing; the curtailing of communication about popular music (through a very small number of youth magazines that were allowed to write about popular music); and subtle informal negotiations taking place between certain musicians

and members of the responsible controlling committee—a class of musicians that had already achieved success and were therefore occupying relatively higher positions. As Bence Csatári observes: "some artists were not punished even if they performed their works in ways that did not conform to the system" as their success brought profit to managers of entertainment venues and directors of culture houses (Csatári 2015, 13).

In addition, pop-rock musicians also practiced self-censorship (Csatári 2007, 290). Yet, this self-censorship may be considered a reflective process where musicians attempted to adhere, on the surface, to state ideology, while devising creative ways of subtle resistance. In other words, the mentioned forms of state control did leave some room for the striving towards creative autonomy: aesthetically, this could mean shifting between genres or styles; in lyrics, through extensive use of "clever" language such as metaphors and double entendre; or even by including one or two more evidently "problematic" songs on the album that would invite negotiation between the artists and members of the committee in order that more subtle political messages would go unnoticed (Csatári 2007, 184). "Creativity" here thus refers to a similar kind of "precarious creativity" as Keane (2016) observes in relation to Chinese cultural workers; it is a resourcefulness as well as the mentioned reflexivity that helps one make use of the opportunities provided by the system. Rather than active resistance, such creative strategies still remain within the realm of "industrial creative labor"—creativity that stays within the system—in contrast with "revolutionary creative labor," which is aimed at overthrowing the system (Kraidy 2016).

Resourcefulness, however, was also present in the form of making use of existing, as well as creating new infrastructure, such as "off the grid" underground spaces, which, in contrast, were outside the formal and state-controlled industry. Private homes served as important locations for performances, practice, recording, as well as networking through house parties (this is explored in more detail in chapter 4), and music making also relied on informal transactions such as trading records privately imported from abroad, or roadies bringing in gear from foreign tours and using them to build and improve live equipment in a Do-It-Yourself manner (this is documented in interviews with roadies active during the 1960s, '70s and '80s conducted by Ómolnár [1987]). Instruments were also often built in a DIY manner (the Rockmúzeum [Rock Museum] in Budapest displays a preserved toilet-seat guitar from the Kádár era), and musicians created and traded amateur cassette recordings of performances, often in the space of their homes. As an interviewed musician narrated the period between 1982 and 1986, when he first started playing in bands on the underground scene in Budapest: "we produced cassettes, and then these cassettes were copied, we also copied others' cassettes and went to the gigs, and then we recorded these gigs, which were copied by others, and that's how [recordings] spread" (interview

with a male musician, January 21, 2019). Another musician active on the scene at the time explains that together with others, they had set up a DIY label and distributor that catered to a particular segment of the scene:

> We released our own cassettes—CDs did not exist back then, and vinyl was unreachable. The Hungarian music industry was different back then, it was not possible to order, let's say, twenty vinyl copies from somewhere—today it is possible. So cassettes remained the only option, so we produced demos and mixtapes for Hungarian [underground] bands. (interview with a female musician, September 22, 2019)

Although this enterprise operated within the informal sphere, it already paved the way for legal small enterprise in the music economy after 1989, bridging the socialist and postsocialist era through underground creativity as subcultural capital transformed into cultural and economic capital. Szemere demonstrates this process through her case studies of the post-1989 careers of small labels Human Telex (Szemere 2001, 150–56), Bahia (156–63), and Trottel (169–76).

CREATIVE AUTONOMY IN POSTSOCIALIST HUNGARY: LIMITATIONS OF A NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Following the 1989/1990 regime change, Eastern European postsocialist countries' reintegration into the capitalist world-system equaled, in the sphere of music, the creation of new markets for western multinational record companies—the so-called "Big Four" of EMI, Sony Music Entertainment, Universal Music Group, and Warner Music Group—and other central actors of the global music economy. As a music manager already active at the time explained it:

> With the regime change, an insane number of artists flooded this country, foreign artists who obviously saw a new market in Eastern Europe, which they ravaged. And the same [happened] on the recording market, of course. The records manufacturer [Hungaroton] disintegrated and [in its place] we had Sony, BMG, EMI, loads of record companies. (interview with a 64-year-old male manager, June 9, 2022)

A strong western orientation emerged in popular music consumption, partly linked to MTV and other international music television channels. Music television was mentioned by some musicians growing up in the 1990s as a formative influence:

> That is when music appeared on television.[7] That was the first time you could see music videos, and when I was at primary school, MTV, Music Television started, much

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7   This does not mean that there was no precedent in the state socialist era. The female underground

later VIVA TV and all these, later MCM [Monte Carlo Music] and French music television. And VH1, and those had a great influence [on me].[8] (interview with a 33-year-old female musician, April 11, 2019)

Besides the entering of western and multinational record companies and media corporations, there was also significant growth in local music production and a multiplicity of newly emerging actors, including radio stations (such as pop radio Danubius, the first Hungarian commercial radio station, active between 1986–2009, and Juventus, still operating today [from 2015, as Sláger FM]), record labels, venues from discotheques to rock clubs, music magazines, and the rise of Sziget festival, from subcultural music space to a thriving live music business aimed at an international audience in the twenty-first century (Szemere and Nagy 2017).

As Barbara Rose Lange documents, by 1992, there were around seventy cassette labels in Hungary, "taking a wide variety of commercial and aesthetic approaches" (Lange 1996, 80). The rapid popularization of the genre of *lakodalmas* (literally: [music] for weddings) or *mulatós* (literally: [music] for partying/celebrating)—usually translated as "wedding rock"—from the late 1980s is linked to the cassette format. It illustrates a particular form of autonomy from the Hungarian state in practice, exercised through building infrastructure from below, in a DIY fashion. In terms of genre aesthetic, *lakodalmas* is undoubtedly heteronomous in the Bourdieusian sense: it is commercially oriented, and as the title suggests, it aims to serve a broad public gathered at weddings, parties, and other forms of celebration—and those that want to recreate this atmosphere in other listening situations. Integrating or mimicking folk melodies, but using pop-rock instrumentation or a modern dance music (disco) sound (Szemere 2001, 144), *lakodalmas* aims primarily to serve working-class and rural audiences; however, through its link to specific occasions, it is also consumed by urban audiences and all social classes.[9] Nevertheless, when the genre was excluded from mass media

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musician quoted above, already active in the 1980s, mentions that she saw [presumable Anglo-American or Western European] "new wave music videos" on television when she was 15–16, that is, in the late 1970s, which similarly had an important influence on her (interview with a female musician, September 22, 2019).

[8] MTV Europe began its satellite broadcast in 1987 and was freely available until 1995. Local channel MTV Hungary was only launched in 2007 (running until 2013, and then between 2017–2022). German music television VIVA (running in Germany between 1993–2018) entered the Hungarian market in 1997 as Z+, later ran as VIVA+ (between 2001–2003) and VIVA (2003–2017).

[9] A wedding musician told me a story, about events taking place in the 2010s, to illustrate this: "When we went to [restaurant venue] Megyeri Csárda in Budapest to play at a wedding party there, we were looking forward to, finally, playing [songs by 1970s-80s' rock band] LGT or Republic [a rock band active from the 1990s]. It'll be great! And then it turned out that half of the audience are musicians and they have absolutely no interest in pop-rock music. They want to party! So Váci Road, [Northern] Budapest, we played [*lakodalmas* hit] 'Hosszú fekete haj'

channels—radio or television—on an aesthetic basis, "not because it was overtly dissident but because they considered it to be in bad taste" (Lange 1996, 76; see also Szemere 2001, 145), musicians made use of the relatively cheap technology of cassette manufacturing to produce recordings which they often, at least initially, directly sold to their audiences, at venues but also "the 'second economy' system of flea markets" (78) (the career of Lajos Galambos, known as Lagzi Lajcsi, the biggest star of the genre, is a good illustration[10]). Cassettes were also copied and traded—"pirated"—in huge amounts, both by musicians and audiences, so this market was to a significant extent informal. At the same time, *lakodalmas* also partly relied on the—Yugoslav (rather than the Hungarian)—state, for its initial popularization. An influential strand of *lakodalmas* developed in the 1980s in Vojvodina, a region in Yugoslavia with a strong Hungarian ethnic minority population, where musicians—besides the already mentioned informal channels—"utilized the established venues of restaurants, arena concerts, and radio where possible" (Lange 1996, 78). Eventually, after spreading from below in Hungary, it was gradually incorporated by mainstream music and media companies, especially commercial television.[11] As Lange describes, "*lakodalmas rock* flourished in the newly forming private sector and became the basis of a cassette industry, which emerged as the Socialist system dissolved in Hungary" (76).

Szemere's (2001) account of the underground music world of Hungary in the 1980s and 1990s focuses on the pre- and post-regime-change careers of musicians and other actors from within the underground music scene. Some of these actors equated the end of state socialism with the (at least temporary) derailment of their careers; others managed to convert their subcultural capital, stemming from their counter-cultural position occupied during the state socialist period, into legitimate cultural and, to a limited extent, economic, capital—for instance, through the setting up and managing of independent record labels (148–76). My interviews confirm this divergence: of the two musicians quoted above, active in the 1980s on the underground scene, the male musician continued his career practically seamlessly in music and other areas of the creative industries in the 1990s and beyond, while the female musician left the scene

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and *mulatós*, really tedious. We were [at that time] in the middle of a really big season and we went to Budapest after very strong rural wedding parties, [and we thought] it'll be great, finally we can play bossa nova, we can play slow rock, we can even play tango, get a bit of refreshment in a musical sense ... and then this big shock" (interview with a 41-year-old male wedding musician, May 30, 2020).

[10]   Although thus far there have not been any academic works published on Galambos's music career, the independent online media outlet Partizán published a substantial interview with the artist that covered his career in detail (Partizán 2020).

[11]   In 1998, the hugely popular, prime-time entertainment music program Dáridó, hosted by Lagzi Lajcsi, debuted on TV2, which itself was launched along with the other major commercial TV station, RTL Klub, in the previous year.

and music entirely and only returned as a hobby musician after a longer hiatus.[12] Szemere's analysis provides insight into the intersection of state-level politics, subcultural logic, and industry-level mechanisms from a postsocialist perspective. Szemere narrates the career paths of the latter, more successful type as, first and foremost, the result of value-based choices. She observes, for instance, how the independent record label Bahia articulated values, "identity and character rooted in the counter-cultural past" (154); the label's (owners') "idea of autonomy," according to her, "consists of determining and conforming to the criteria by which it selects and signs up recording artists" (153). It could, however, also be interpreted as the effective management of various resources—crucially, subcultural capital stemming from the owners' pre-1989 underground presence and a professional network embedded into the Kádár-era Budapest underground cultural scene—in an economic and labor organization form becoming available at the time, that is, capitalist small or self-entrepreneurship.[13]

Although they are very different in terms of symbolic status and audience, the alternative rock-oriented independent labels described by Szemere can be compared to the small entrepreneurship of the cassette labels of the *lakodalmas* scene on the grounds that both made use of opportunities for entrepreneurship in the new capitalist environment. Both, moreover, utilized household labor and resources. Szemere also suggests that the particular counter-cultural discourse of autonomy characteristic of the (late) socialist era—autonomy from the control of the state and the political system—effectively disappears along with state socialism (109). What emerges in its stead is a particular and characteristic postsocialist set of attitudes appearing partly in response to the tension of the new capitalistic relations, competition, privatization, informality (including "black market" exchanges) and rapidly growing inequalities and job insecurity; and partly the ideology that places these processes within a moralized discourse of progression and (the difficulty of) "catching up" with the West. In other words, the discourse blames Hungary's (and Eastern Europe's) "backwardness" for the experienced problems as opposed to the limitations arising from the particular position from which the country reintegrated into the global capitalist order—as a source of cheap labor (Csányi 2024, 5; Gagyi and Gerőcs 2022)—and the social costs of the rapid processes of privatization and precarization accompanied by individualized competition:

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[12]   Unequal gender relations and gender-based societal expectations definitely played a part in how these two careers turned out: the male musician used his social and subcultural resources efficiently. At the same time, the female musician's leaving music behind, at least temporarily, had to do with both her negative experiences on the scene and the demand from her non-musician husband at the time to stop investing time in music as it is "stupid" (interview with a female musician, September 22, 2019).

[13]   A similar process taking place in post-Yugoslavia in the 1990s is described by Praznik as "*the enterprizification of the alternative*, whose effect was to transform the relations of social solidarity into individualism, competition, and rivalry" (Praznik 2021, 145; italics in the original).

> The stories [of postsocialist independent record labels] exemplify also a conspicuous trend in private and public discourses surrounding the business world in postsocialist Hungary, which is typically cast in a moral framework. Complaints of "ruthlessness," "lawlessness," "carelessness," and the "Wild East" predictably recur. Today's entrepreneurs, according to a widespread belief, are desperate to make as much money as fast and with as little effort as possible. Business, from this perspective, had become indistinguishable from crime. (Szemere 2001, 148)

The issues of informality ("lawlessness") in production and commerce and the individualism of capitalist competition ("ruthlessness") as opposed to relations of care and, perhaps, solidarity ("carelessness") are combined in this discursive framing. The framing, as Szemere herself observes in relation to the independent record labels springing up in the 1990s (149), is at the same time blind to the structural difficulties surrounding the newly emerging entrepreneurship and self-employment, including intense competition accompanied by a lack of support services, which ensured that enterprises mostly relied on informal support networks of friends and relatives (Roberts and Tholen 1998, 60). References to the "Wild East," in addition, evoke the "*topos* of west European moral superiority"—an internalization of what Stuart Hall (1995, 189) calls "the *longue-durée* tendency of treating eastern Europe as 'barbaric' [that] has been part of the West's production of its 'internal others'" (Böröcz 2006, 127), which became activated in the process of capitalist and European (re)integration. Notions of creative autonomy are therefore complicated by a discourse of self-colonization: "a [western capitalist] hegemony without domination" (Kiossev 2011).

Corresponding to this framework, in an interview, an electronic music DJ and producer referred to the lack of regulation in the 1990s and connected the nightlife economy, into which popular music is partly embedded, with informality as grey or even black market, both points being in line with the "Wild East" topos. However, rather than making a moral judgment, he emphasized the beneficial effects of—often dubious—entrepreneurship with regard to club life: "the nineties were bountiful, clubs were thriving because everyone was laundering their money. Petrol fraud, et cetera, et cetera. An insane number of restaurants opened, this went on until the 2000s" (interview with a 34-year-old male DJ, producer and educator, March 23, 2020).

These observations underline the mentioned limitation of predominant conceptions of creative autonomy, which is their unproblematized national focus. This can be considered a limitation in that they fail to consider the impact of the global relations of dependency among nation-states and regions on the conditions and experiences of cultural labor. On the Eastern European semi-periphery, the experience of creative autonomy (or lack thereof) after the end of state socialism is shaped by western cultural hegemony as well as the local conditions of production. Along with the movement towards integration into

the global music industries in the postsocialist period, a self-colonizing narrative of the "West" serving as a cultural model for the "East" also emerged. This narrative is based on the presumption that Eastern Europe is constantly "lagging behind" the West, and that the pop industry fails to offer anything original—and therefore autonomous—besides copies of musical styles produced in the core. Ewa Mazierska demonstrates that this discursive framework, which she refers to as "the Cold War paradigm,"[14] is also reproduced in scholarly works addressing popular music in Eastern European countries in the state socialist period, such as Ryback (1990) or Ramet (1994) (Mazierska 2016, 2–4). The desire, and at the same time impossibility, of "catching up" to western ideals, aesthetics, and professionalism fit into this moralized geographical and historical order. At the same time, as the quoted interview indicates, the local opportunities created by disadvantageous conditions (in relation to the West) accompanying the transition period which included thriving organized crime even acting as a driving force, may also be acknowledged.

Summary

Accounts of creative labor in the global core tend not to reflect on either the given countries' hegemonic position, generally, or in the cultural industries. Instead, they tend to unquestioningly generalize the specific characteristics of creative labor and creative autonomy in their particular nation state contexts and under their political systems. Recent, twenty-first-century critical accounts tend to identify the process of neoliberalization and the post-Fordist labor regime as central explanatory forces in the character of contemporary creative labor, wherein, with the waning of the post-World War II welfare state, the freedom of the (creative) worker essentially equates with assuming material and social-symbolic risk. Among such conditions, a new, feminized, precarious entrepreneurship comes to predominate creative work. Creative workers, moreover, actively reproduce this ideology through their entrepreneurial subjectivities (mirroring the new digitalized creative industries) by means of their creative output, through which they yield varying amounts of symbolic power over the rest of society.

There are a number of important aspects of creative work and autonomy that have been overlooked in such western-centric analyses—aspects that studies situated outside of the global core may potentially reveal. Aforementioned authors focusing on contemporary China have theorized that the role of the state

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[14] This is a term I consider imprecise as it obscures continuities in terms of the global position of Eastern European countries between the Cold War era and the postsocialist period.

in cultural production (including as employer) and the ways in which workers manage creative expression reflects the three aspects of an "art–commerce–politics relation" (Lin 2018, 9). In a similar vein, in the following chapter, I look at relations of dependency, based on the experiences of workers, in Hungarian popular music during a time of increasing government incorporation and ideological control through cultural and media policy under the post-2010 Fidesz-led governments; policy implementations which have taken place alongside an ongoing transformation of the music industries through digitalization and platformization. An overview of some of the characteristic aspects of creative autonomy under state socialist and postsocialist Hungary, particularly via the "art–commerce–politics" set of relationships, points to the critical role played by informality and the creative use of existing resources in a clime relatively lacking in resources, be they material, infrastructural, or symbolic. In respect to the latter of these resources, in the socialist period, "symbolic lack" referred to a sense of lacking legitimacy, whereas in postsocialist times, it referred to a sense of moral deficit arising from the perception of "lagging behind" the mythical professionalized West.

Creative Autonomy in the "System of National Cooperation": Professionalization, Incorporation, and Digital Entrepreneurship

Creative Autonomy and the State between 2010–2020

From the late 1990s, but especially the early 2000s onwards, digital technology has increasingly shaped the music ecosystem. It impacted music creation through new technologies for recording and editing, thus broadening access for musicians to studio technology, previously mainly accessible through record labels—that is, corporate entities that had adequate material resources as well as immaterial ones in the form of professional personnel. In the UK, for instance, such changes fueled the emergence of a relatively independent, decentralized electronic dance music scene in the 1990s, consisting of a multitude of microenterprises (Hesmondhalgh 1998; Maughan and Smith 1998). Digital technology also shaped music consumption via new formats, such as CDs, DVDs, CD-ROM, and writeable disks; along with new devices, including personal computers, on which listening to MP3s and other digital formats was enabled via software such as Winamp (Morris 2015, 30–65). New devices also included the MP3 player, which enabled widespread mobile listening to an unprecedented selection of music and, along with Winamp, helped solidify the (interactive) playlist as a new logic of listening (as opposed to the album or single, radio or music television, where the listener has no power over compiling the playlist) (Morris 2015, 50–51). Internet technology also helped create new spaces of interaction around music, from mailing lists, websites, and message boards to, from the early 2000s, music blogs and social networking sites (e.g., Bennett and Peterson 2004; Baym 2007; Kruse 2010; Jetto 2010). These changes significantly shaped the ways in which musicians—active music consumers themselves—work across the globe.

Although internet access, especially broadband, spread at a slower pace in Hungary and the Eastern European region compared to the USA or Western

Europe,[1] by the early to mid-2000s, the mentioned technologies of production, distribution, consumption, and communication had also become widespread in Hungary. As Zoltán Lakatos reported in 2005, a relatively small but active music consumer group quickly shifted to downloading MP3 through peer-to-peer filesharing platforms (Napster, Kazaa, DC++, later so-called torrent sites), burning and copying CDs and DVDs, and similar practices (Lakatos 2005, para. 21). Informal music exchange was not new, since cassette tape copying had been widespread since the socialist era, partly through—mostly underground—music fan and collector communities; however, the scope and diversity of music (and other media content) available, and thus entering into circulation on the local (domestic) level, grew drastically. The end of state socialism opened up the international circulation of popular music, but predominantly in a one-way flow: from the global core to the semiperiphery mediated by multinational corporations (major record labels). Moreover, access to this music was contingent on income: CDs, for instance, remained fairly expensive well into the 2000s (for this reason, cassette tapes dominated as a format throughout the entire 1990s, unlike in the US or Western Europe). It is, therefore, difficult to overestimate the significance of the possibility of accessing recordings through peer-to-peer file-sharing, especially once broadband had become relatively widespread in the country.[2] As a consequence of file-sharing, record sales steeply declined despite a relative rise in the standard of living in the years leading up to 2000 (after the austerity of the so-called "Bokros Package;" Lakatos 2005, para. 11).

The global crisis experienced by the recording industry at the turn of the century and during the first half of the 2000s is widely documented: the transformation of the global economy of music was accompanied by the temporarily weakening power of record companies, including the majors, which not only downsized their central offices, but also closed many of their local ones. As part of this process, with the exception of Universal, all majors left Hungary. As Taylor (2016) observes, based on Wallis and Malm (1984, 105) regarding the 1970s and 1980s, during an economic downturn, record labels decrease risk in part by falling back on the more secure strategy of marketing international—specifically, Anglo-American—artists, in smaller, non-western markets, as opposed to supporting local industries (Taylor 2016, 83). A similar process could be observed in the early twenty-first century in Eastern Europe (Elavsky 2011). In the global core,

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[1]   By 2007, a little below 51% of households in Hungary owned a desktop computer, and a little above 11% a portable computer. 33% of households had access to broadband coverage at the same time—a number that had increased in the preceding years due to the EU's digital policy (KSH 2008, 7).

[2]   To illustrate the volume of copying, Lakatos reports that a 150 thousand-strong group of "intensive copiers" made copies of audio recordings on 6.2 million empty containers (e.g., CDs) per year, meaning 40 containers per person; and that they created 84 copies for every single purchased audio container (Lakatos 2005, para. 20).

techno-optimistic discourses around "disintermediation," that is, the lessening of the need for traditional intermediaries, particularly record companies, to mediate between artists and their audiences, were a widespread narrative (Sun 2019, 237). In Hungary, the optimism of this narrative was somewhat mitigated by an awareness of the small size of the local market and the difficulty—almost impossibility—of Hungarian artists reaching international audiences combined with the lesser degree of professionalization of the music industries (Barna 2021, 139).

Nevertheless, on the global level, the emergence and successful expansion of technology companies selling digital music, whether in the form of selling access to MP3 files (iTunes) or a listening or multimedia experience, such as music or video streaming platforms (Spotify or YouTube), led to a post-crisis consolidation and a renewed concentration of capital—this time not only in the hands of major record labels, but also the mentioned digital platform companies (e.g., Meier and Manzerolle 2019; Drott 2024). The growth of income from digital music, which started globally in 2004 (IFPI 2024, 10), occurred later in Hungary and at a slower rate (according to data published by MAHASZ [the Association of Hungarian Record Companies], 2013 was the low point in combined digital and physical sales [MAHASZ, n.d.]). The monetization program of YouTube through its so-called Content ID system was launched in Hungary in 2012; French music streaming company Deezer entered the Hungarian market in the same year, and Swedish Spotify in 2013. New intermediaries, notably digital distributors also emerged—to date, there is one Hungarian for-profit company, WM Music Digital (and one non-profit, Dalok.hu), and a small number of international companies with local offices (Believe Digital or The state51 Conspiracy). However, as already shown in my introductory chapter, the live music sector grew at a faster rate during the same period, and dominated the Hungarian music industries at the time of the research, both in relative terms, compared to recorded music, and in absolute terms. The growth of the live sector was largely due to the plethora of music festivals, especially Sziget—which, by the 2010s, had become a major commercial music festival, drawing a primarily international crowd (Szemere and Nagy 2017). My interviews confirmed what is also stated in the ProArt Music Industry Reports (e.g., Virágh and Főző 2018, 40), that live music was crucial in terms of income: the vast majority of mentions of income was connected to live gigs.

This growth inevitably went hand in hand with a process of formalization and professionalization in the live sector.[3] A crucial triggering point in this process was the so-called West-Balkán tragedy in 2011: on January 15 of that year, a mass panic and stampede at a club venue called West-Balkán in central Budapest killed three young women and left 14 people injured. The situation resulted from a twofold overbooking of the venue, a regular practice at the time on the

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[3]   I include the club DJ/electronic music sphere in the category of live music.

club scene. The tragic events, besides leading to the criminal punishment of the music promoters and organizers judged to be responsible, also prompted drastic new regulations: already in February, authorities coordinated heightened efforts to inspect and control "music and dance" events at club venues, and a decree was accepted in March, entering into force in its final form in July (Gedeon 2012, 223). Lex West-Balkán, as the decree came to be known, however, was drafted without consulting expert groups in the entertainment industry (224). It meant strict security regulations impacting the opening and operating of club venues as well as outdoor festivals and was subsequently criticized by the promoter profession as bordering on irrationality (224). As an interviewed electronic musician remembered the period: "The next hotspot[4] was West-Balkán I think, which was followed by stricter regulations, and a lot of [venues] had to close down again" (interview with a 34-year-old male DJ, producer and educator, March 23, 2020). The events, as he argued, "dealt a severe blow to entertainment venues, and it was after this [incident] that festivals became stronger." Attempts were also made by live music organizers and promoters to organize themselves and to form (typically short-lived) professional bodies (Org4Org—an organization for organizers—was one of these). Gradually, live music went through a process of formalization with a weight shift from club life towards the festival scene.[5]

Yet, despite growth and some formalization, informal relations also remained standard in the music industries, in both the live and recording sectors, demonstrating characteristic semiperipheral hybridity and mixed economic conditions. For instance, an interviewed singer narrated how her band had begun working with a record label—among the largest and best-known independents in Hungary—without a contract: "We didn't have a contract, for instance, I asked for a contract, and he said he doesn't usually sign one" (interview with a 34-year-old female singer, songwriter, band leader, January 22, 2019). Nevertheless, the institutionalization of music industry education—primarily music management—has also contributed to a process of professionalization, beginning at the time of the decline of the recording industry and the growth of the festival-based live sector. In addition to the sporadic establishment of music industry or business courses at universities like BME (the Budapest University of Technology and

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4   The 'next' in this context refers to after 2008. As the musician put it: "In 2008, what really came as a blow was the global economic crisis. Of course, a lot of club owners and promoters, who originally started this as a hobby enterprise with the hope of getting very rich, went out of business" (interview with a 34-year-old male DJ, producer and educator, March 23, 2020).

5   Another crucial event impacting Budapest nightlife was the arrest of entrepreneur László Vizoviczki, together with high-ranking police officers, in 2012 (indictment followed in 2014). The entrepreneur was accused of, and later, convicted, in 2020, with bribery and budget fraud, involving corrupt relationships with the detained police chiefs who 'helped' keep Vizoviczki's nightclubs running smoothly, with high traffic and under illegal police protection. The nightclub portfolio included "mega clubs" on Hajógyári sziget (also home to Sziget Festival) as well as various nightclubs in the city center (K-Monitor, n.d.).

Economics), the University of Pécs, Corvinus University of Budapest, as well as IBS (International Business School Budapest), other institutions like MHRS (Majdnem Híres Rocksuli/Almost Famous Rock School), which was founded in 2008, and ZH (Zeneipari Hivatal/Music Industry Office), which was founded in 2013, were established to offer certified training in music management. In addition, ImPro School, offering courses in production, songwriting, composition, and later management, was also founded in 2010. Each of these programs followed western (in particular UK) models in their course design and training material; however, a key resource offered is the possibility to network with industry professionals invited as guest lecturers and through internships forming part of the programs. Some of the managers I interviewed had attended either MHRS or ZH (or both), some of the musicians had managers with certificates, and some musicians also attended courses in order to gain management and industry knowledge and skills (ImPro School started a "music management for artists" course specifically for this purpose). The establishment of industry training contributed to a new generation of music industry professionals entering the music industries with the hope of establishing careers in the field.

In the meantime, musicians' and music industry workers' relation to the state and political actors was also shifting. In the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis, combined with a local political crisis ongoing since 2006, the year 2010 brought a political turn, with the second Fidesz-led government (after 1998–2002) led by Viktor Orbán as Prime Minister entering into power, and remaining in power in subsequent cycles up until the time of writing. The government's self-termed "System of National Cooperation" can be understood as a new regime of capital accumulation and hegemony building, which is based on serving western capital with labor whilst simultaneously strengthening national capital and a national bourgeoisie (Éber et al. 2019). The subsequent Fidesz-led governments have also established a strong right-wing ideological pillar, primarily through the control of mass media—including public service radio and television, but also press and cross-country billboard campaigns; and secondarily, through cultural policy. As we described elsewhere with Mária Madár, Kristóf Nagy, and Márton Szarvas, the production of ideology and the establishment of state hegemonic strategies have been achieved through the transformation of ownership relations and financing, the operating and legitimization of new institutions by the government in cultural spheres, the "occupation," transformation, or closing of pre-existing institutions, and the allocation or withdrawal of funding (Barna et al. 2019, 147). In these processes, a market-oriented management perspective is compatible with the functions of (re)producing ideology (ibid.).

Cultural policy during this regime can be described as a dynamic between two main processes, namely incorporation and ideological control (Barna et al. 2019). Incorporation in this context refers to the inclusion of cultural producers

via new or transformed institutions. "Incorporation should be viewed as a two-way process, simultaneously shaping the dominant culture and its opposition. Incorporation is thus a constantly reformulating and transforming key point of hegemony building, through which the newly established hegemony is loosened and extended, and through which incorporated cultural producers can obtain more resources and prestige" (Barna et al. 2019, 245). Ideological control, on the other hand, refers to more direct conservative and ethno-nationalist cultural policy, and the active promotion of artists and works displaying conservative, ethno-nationalist or populist values and aesthetics. The latter strategy was introduced in areas traditionally characterized by high levels of state involvement, which are imbued with high symbolic value, such as literature and the fine arts. The two processes, however, are intertwined through financing; their separation is primarily an analytical one.

In popular music, state funding was organized through the National Cultural Fund (Nemzeti Kulturális Alap, NKA) from 2014. The so-called Cseh Tamás Program[6] (CsTP) was introduced by the third Orbán government in 2014. Apart from a smaller program called PANKKK (Program for a National Popular Music Culture) operating between 2005–2011, the CsTP, renamed Hangfoglaló Program[7] in 2017, was significant for music industry workers as it was the first time popular music had received significant state support and recognition after the end of state socialism. The main source of funding for the program was 25 percent of the blank media levy amassed by the association and collecting society Artisjus. Through their sub-programs, which are based on a grant application system, CsTP and Hangfoglaló have supported writing, recording, and video production for artists; national and international tours (international including gigs aimed at ethnic Hungarian audiences in neighboring countries, particularly Transylvania); participating at international showcases through the export program (c.f. Barna 2021); support for live music venues; as well as popular music education and heritage.

At the same time, increasing ideological control and, even more characteristically, an ideological alignment on the part of musicians and music industry workers can be observed during the time period in question. Elements of the Orbán regime's hegemonic populist discourse, such as the symbolic and moral importance of patriotism and the value of the homeland, posited in opposition to a threatening "elsewhere," namely the West, began permeating mainstream Hungarian popular music, along with an emphasis on the value of the nuclear family, corresponding gender roles, and the representation of national unity through

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[6] Named after the well-known singer-songwriter Tamás Cseh, who became popular in the early 1970s and remained so until his death in 2009.

[7] The name—literally the adjective form of "sound conquest"—is a play on words, referencing the "honfoglalás," that is, the ninth-century Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian basin, but changing "hon" ("homeland") to "hang" ("sound").

diversity (Barna and Patakfalvi-Czirják 2022a, 2022b, 2024). In the post-2010 era, populism had become "a central ideology and source of legitimation in popular culture as much as political speech, shaping not only pro-government but also oppositional, and even anti-establishment, discourses. Within popular Hungarian music, therefore, artists and songs that assume a political position either align themselves with or adjust to the hegemonic populist discourse" (Barna and Patakfalvi-Czirják 2024). This alignment can be positional as in the case of accepting funding or opportunities to perform at prominent political events (e.g., celebration of national holidays) or in projects of political significance (typically popular songs recorded for memorial days such as "Egy szabad országért" [For a free land, 2016]; Barna and Patakfalvi-Czirják 2022a). It can also be symbolic: for instance, participation in the mentioned projects—which often involves photographs taken with prominent politicians—functions as an endorsement, a symbolic legitimation of the government, its policies and the dominant ideology by prominent (pop) cultural actors.[8] Finally, it can be aesthetic: topical issues such as "traditional" gender roles, (nuclear) family values, the homeland and the topos of the "fifteen million Hungarians" (an ethnic-based unity of Hungarians across borders) appear in song lyrics (e.g., "Tizenötmillióból egy" [One of fifteen million] by the rock band Kowalsky meg a Vega). Positional, symbolic, and aesthetic alignment may all appear combined in one production—singer Ákos Kovács (performing as "Ákos") is arguably the most characteristic example (Barna and Patakfalvi-Czirják 2024).

At the same time, an overall expressed apoliticism dominated the popular music profession, serving to obscure the mentioned relations of dependency and strategies of more or less explicit alignment. In individual interviews, the majority of the musicians or music industry workers made little or no reference to politics. None of my questions was directly aimed at politics in general; instead, they addressed working conditions in the industry and things that could be improved for workers in music in Hungary (this was different in the group interviews, and the weight of politics increased for the workers in the wake of the COVID-19 situation, as I demonstrate below). Where politics or political actors were thematized by the workers, they were explicitly linked to two main issues: firstly, the ways in which live music performance opportunities are connected to political actors or sides, and the strategies musicians and their teams may take in light of this; secondly, the funding system. Regarding the former, a musician and educator stated the following: "Everywhere, it is the hand of politics, and entertainment venues are of course in political hands, everything … it has always been like this, in the 2000s, in the '90s too" (interview with a 34-year-old male DJ,

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8   A well-known example is pop singer Gabi Tóth "coming out" as a proud Christian, which coincided with her endorsement of Viktor Orbán during the political campaign period leading up to the 2022 elections.

producer and educator, March 23, 2020). Although this musician emphasizes the continuity of dependence on political actors, in the post-2010 era, actors close to the government were able to capitalize upon the growing live music sector, which can be seen in the involvement of state companies or corporations close to the government acting as sponsors or operating companies in music events. The Hungarian state energy company MVM and the gambling firm Szerencsejáték Zrt., for instance, regularly sponsored music festivals (such as Volt) and larger live shows. The state-owned Media Services and Support Trust Fund (MTVA) also regularly sponsors talent contests (e.g., Nagyszínpad ["Main stage"]) and award ceremonies (e.g., the Petőfi Music Award) that hold key gatekeeping positions in the popular music field (Barna and Patakfalvi-Czirják 2024). Club and festival promoters—in the latter case, especially those associated with major festivals such as Sziget, Volt, Balaton Sound, Strand or B.My. Lake[9]—were broadly identified by musicians and behind-the-scenes workers as the key music industry gatekeepers. The interview subjects tended to name the same prominent promoters as actors with the power to decide who gets access to festival audiences and larger venues and who does not. These promoters—among them Norbert Lobenwein and Péter Muraközy—are often known to be on good terms with prominent Fidesz politicians.[10] Explicitly political events, such as shows organized during campaign periods, also provide opportunities for some musicians to play live. Where these were mentioned, a pragmatic view was expressed, which could be described as strategically apolitical:

> [Politics] stays separate from music. Although it has happened—imagine!—that our gig was cancelled because of politics. […] We [played] at some political event, and we are absolutely *not* interested in politics. We played there, and the other party said we couldn't go to theirs, when it had already been arranged and we were supposed to play with a live band. […] There was also an occasion when [in a smaller North Hungarian town], we played at the event of one [political] side in the morning and that of the other one in the afternoon. In my opinion, music belongs to everyone, and it has to be completely apolitical. (interview with a 39-year-old female jazz and pop singer, July 10, 2020)

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9   Some of these major festivals are no longer held—Volt was last held in 2022, and Balaton Sound in 2024.
10   During the 2022 elections, Lobenwein, the organizer of the Volt Festival in the city of Sopron, openly endorsed the city's Fidesz candidate, his photograph appearing with the candidate on Fidesz posters. In 2019, a minor scandal was caused by Lobenwein allowing a short film, played on big screens during intermissions, depicting images from the time of the 1989 political transition, among them, Viktor Orbán giving a speech at the reburial of Prime Minister Imre Nagy, martyr of the 1956 revolution. Festival goers—Hungarians as well as an international audience—were thus greeted by images of a young Orbán (Hvg.hu 2019). Muraközy, best known as the organizer of the Veszprém Street Music Festival, admitted to being on good terms with prominent Fidesz politician Tibor Navracsics, also from the town of Veszprém (Vincze 2012).

In the "art–commerce–politics relation" (Lin 2019), this articulated attitude seems to express a dependence (heteronomy) on both commerce—a wish to play to "everyone" regardless of political side, which is also an economic necessity—and politics: although the musician professed to be apolitical, it is precisely this strategic "apoliticism" that enables her to perform at political events, supporting and legitimating political actors.

Where to draw the line between political and not political, however, could also be strategically mitigated by musicians. This is illustrated by a live sound engineer, who downplayed the political significance of the band he worked with playing at the Transylvanian Hungarian music festival Tusványos, held every summer for a primarily ethnic Hungarian audience. The Hungarian Prime Minister's Office is a primary sponsor of the festival, along with various state corporations and local councils giving their support (in 2016, the festival's website listed 25 Hungarian local councils as sponsors [Rényi 2016]). Moreover, Orbán annually gives a speech there, and these speeches are regarded by Hungarian media, both pro-government and oppositional, as key in setting out Fidesz's ideological program for the coming year(s): for instance, it was during a Tusványos speech that Orbán introduced the concept of "illiberalism" as a central element in Fidesz's politics (Vansteenberg 2022, para. 8). The sound engineer talked about participating at the festival in the following way:

> There are political events, which the band usually does not do, well, many bands don't, but some do. […] In a way, the festival in Tusványos is also a political event, since it is [funded] by Fidesz, and Orbán gives his [annual] speech there. Still, everyone plays there, because it doesn't count, what counts is the audience, [but] how the money got there … that doesn't matter, people aren't interested in that. (interview with a 27-year-old male sound engineer, April 4, 2020)

Although the professional downplays the symbolic significance of Tusványos in a likely attempt to lessen the controversy of the band having performed there, the festival is arguably the most publicly debated music event of the post-2010 era. Prominent alternative musicians—the bands Quimby or Kiscsillag, more recently Bori Péterfy—have received public scrutiny, including from their fans, for having played at the event, and were forced to attempt to explain themselves (e.g., Hvg.hu 2016, Molnár 2023). At the same time, the festival is undoubtedly a key site for establishing a cross-border Hungarian audience; choosing to avoid it, therefore, may appear as a significant economic disadvantage to musicians and their teams.

The second issue, which was more typically thematized as a political one, was the state funding of popular music and the role of the National Cultural Fund (NKA). The central role of NKA for popular musicians after 2010 is indicated by a high number of mentions in the individual and group interviews

(192 code occurrences). Equally important is radio (with 187 code occurrences), both state (public service) and commercial radio. In the following, I analyze the interlinked role of the two from the perspective of Hungarian musicians and music industry workers in the post-2010 period, in particular the time of the research, which coincided with the fourth Orbán government.

PUBLIC SERVICE POPULAR MUSIC: MR2 PETŐFI

Despite the changing practices in music consumption along with digitalization, particularly in respect to the spread of streaming (including YouTube), in Hungary, listening to music in general and hearing new music in particular, to a significant extent, still took place via the radio during the time of research. According to the 2020 Music Industry Report compiled by ProArt (an umbrella organization for collecting societies in Hungary), radio and advertisement-based YouTube (as opposed to subscription-based) were the most popular sources for listening to music. Based on the responses of 1000 people between the ages of 18 and 59 who were representative of the Hungarian population in terms of age, gender, education level, regional distribution and size of administrative area, 68% of the respondents listened to radio daily while 31.4% listened to YouTube (Jakab and Főző 2020, 13). In light of the continuing importance of radio in music consumption, of which musicians were well aware, they frequently articulated the relatively small number of Hungarian songs getting airplay or being selected into the "rotation" as an issue with serious material consequences for them. In 2018, the Music Industry Report observed that

> Musical diversity drastically decreased on [public service popular music station] Radio Petőfi in the past two years: in 2015, they played more than 11 thousand different songs, and in 2017, less than 5 thousand recordings made up the repertoire. The narrowing of the repertoire also concerned Hungarian compositions, but to a lesser extent: in 2015, 28% of songs played at least once by market leader Radio Petőfi were Hungarian, and 44% in 2017. (Virágh and Főző 2018, 60)

The number of songs thus decreased from 3080 to 2200. The statistics, however, mirror the perspective of songs and not artists—the interviews also demonstrated a perception that the number of artists selected for radio has decreased drastically. According to some musicians and songwriters, this lack of attention to Hungarian repertoires places a career barrier in front of them by simultaneously depriving them of promotion and royalty income.

A clear point of reference in the interviews was public service station MR2 Radio Petőfi between the period of 2007 and 2016, and especially between 2007

and 2012, when the station played a prominent role in the Hungarian cultural field. MR2 was transformed into a popular music station in 2007 under György Such, head of Hungarian Radio at the time. Such's goal was to create a pop music station aimed at a young audience, which—also positioning itself in relation to commercial music radio stations—assumed a "trendsetting," taste-forming role (interview with a radio presenter, January 15, 2019). The period between 2007 and 2012 is frequently described as MR2's "cultural mission" period, when the station explicitly undertook the goal of popularizing Hungarian-language alternative pop-rock. The station and its editors effectively contributed to mainstreaming underground acts in a way that was unprecedented in Hungarian popular music. For that reason, these years were recalled as a kind of golden age in many interviews (the same narrative underlies media portal *Telex*'s video report on Radio Petőfi [Simor et al. 2022]). A key to effectively popularizing upcoming artists and alternative sounds lay in the station's close coordination with the festival sector: for instance, amidst the mentioned rise of music festivals, every major event would have an MR2 stage featuring the very same artists on rotation on the radio, while special live performances such as acoustic sets or symphonic orchestra setups would provide exclusive material for the radio. "What was characteristic is that if your song got into the daily rotation on Radio Petőfi, we're talking after 2007, then sooner or later [promoter Norbert] Lobenwein would call you and invite you to Volt [...]—festival gig, which means a lot of cash" (interview with a radio presenter, January 15, 2019). Or as a musician remembered: "I'll give you an example from between 2010 and 2015: if we had a song on rotation on Radio Petőfi, that brought us 30 town days [gigs at local festivals] plus. With 30 plus town days, 30 plus gigs, I gave twelve people work and income" (interview with a 37-year-old male hip hop artist, April 6, 2020).

Some musicians highlighted the direct and personal relationship between artists and radio gatekeepers, emphasizing the accessibility of this mass medium without an established professional network.

> [...] the studio recording was ready, and we sent it again to [MR2 editor and presenter] Gergő [Gergely] Horváth, and he wrote back saying he still likes it a lot, but he still can't do anything with it, he doesn't have the power [...]. And we were sad [...] and the following week, he became the head of Radio Petőfi, and he called me saying, "A song premiere tomorrow?" (interview with a 31-year-old female singer-songwriter, June 7, 2018)

Therefore, this period felt, at least in retrospect, like a democratic moment in post-1989 Hungarian popular music to many musicians.

The year 2012, however, saw another change in programming as a combined consequence of several different factors. Firstly, the station's management aimed to reach a younger audience, partly following a commercial logic and drawing on

the established model of BBC Radio 1 (those ideal 27-year-olds that comprised MR2's target audience in 2007 had reached 32 by this time) (interview with a radio presenter, January 15, 2019). Secondly, a strong international popular music trend had emerged, namely a mainstream form of EDM (electronic dance music), with dubstep being the most typical style (most prominently represented by Skrillex). This international trend manifested locally, from the perspective of the radio, in a growing number of tracks submitted by artists that followed this style, partly replacing Hungarian-language alternative pop-rock. The station responded by gradually integrating this electronic music trend into the repertoire, in line with the aim of drawing a younger audience (ibid.). Thirdly, the politics of frequency allocation also played a role. In 2012, NeoFM, a commercial pop radio station with a countrywide reach and 1.8 million listeners (out of a population of 9.7 million), was terminated, which resulted in an almost doubling of Petőfi's audience (reaching 1 million). In the view of MR's management, the new audience was used to "trend following"—the policy of NeoFM as a commercial station—as opposed to being responsive to taste forming; Petőfi thus accommodated this market logic. In 2015–2016, it aimed to broaden its audience to 1.8–2 million. To reach this goal, the management moved Hungarian-language content mainly to night-time slots (later, this policy was modified somewhat) (ibid.). The year 2016 saw a major downsizing (141 people) and restructuring of public service media in connection with the centralization of the national media apparatus, which included MR2 (Szalay 2016). At this time, many prominent editors and presenters active in the preceding years, including the mentioned Gergely Horváth, were forced to leave the station. At the same time, Petőfi's significance for Hungarian musicians as a channel for both popularization and direct income remained, since, at the time of research, the only popular music radio with a countrywide reach was (commercial station) Retro Radio (launched in 2018), which, due to its nostalgic repertoire, provided no benefits to younger-generation artists (although it remained an important source of royalty income for musicians and songwriters active in the 1970s to 1990s).

Artists—in particular those already active in the "golden age" of MR2, and perhaps even benefitting from the station's role at that time—expressed resentment over the disappearance of this important channel of popularization and potential (royalty) income. As a manager expressed on behalf of the band she worked for: "The band has a lot to thank Petőfi for, and not only us but others too, but now, for the past few years, we're not so thankful" (interview with a 39-year-old female manager, February 4, 2019). As opposed to the relative ease and accessibility of radio gatekeepers prior to 2016, musicians at the time of research complained about the lack of transparency in the selection. When potential factors were named, these were often informal connections and specifically political alignment or connection. "Those who get radio airplay are, in my

opinion, either very, very good mates with the editor, childhood friends, or they smoke weed or drink beer with them, or there is political pressure—these are the two ways" (interview with a 32-year-old female musician, June 12, 2018). Another musician named the same aspects, but saw market logic as the ultimate factor:

> I don't like and don't believe in conspiracy theories as there are, of course, a lot of factors, politics plays a role, acquaintances or networks play a role, along with what views you can generate on other spaces or platforms [...], but I think this is a business decision first and foremost. (interview with a 39-year-old male pop singer, March 27, 2020)

A third musician called the system "a lot more centralized today" than in 2014, when she got her first song on MR2 (interview with a 31-year-old female singer-songwriter, June 7, 2018).

The trajectory of MR2 under the post-2010 regime combines a market orientation ("trend following" aimed at a specific age segment) with serving the government's agenda of establishing a centralized and controlled media apparatus, also serving as the main channel of Fidesz's right-wing ideology. Besides directly serving this through the news spots in between music broadcasts, the narrowing Hungarian repertoire also evidently favored selected government-aligning artists, among them Magdolna Rúzsa and Ákos, the two most played artists of the station. The experience of (broadly defined) alternative pop-rock musicians, favored by the station in the 2007–2012 era, is that of more state control, despite the fact that the 2007–2012 era involved more explicit taste forming, which also had its omissions, notably hit-oriented pop music.[11] More importantly, it is experienced as a significant loss of opportunities in a material sense: a nationwide audience for musicians. For radio programmers, the same setup resulted in less "institutional autonomy" (Toynbee 2000): decreased power to shape the popular music landscape according to their own tastes and cultural mission within the machinery of public service media.

POPULAR MUSIC AND THE NATIONAL CULTURAL FUND

MR2 Petőfi thus acted as a crucial gatekeeper for a time, directly asserting power as well as providing a platform for upcoming and established Hungarian musicians. It shaped and solidified a "mainstreamed" alternative Hungarian-language popular music scene (Barna 2015), the imprint of which was still traceable at the time of research in respect to practices of listening to music, tastes, festival lineups and industry networks of cooperation. I want to argue that after 2014, with the launching of the Cseh Tamás and Hangfoglaló Programs, NKA took on

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[11]   Commercial pop was nevertheless present on the station via international music (Barna 2015).

a partly similar role, even if it operated on the basis of a different logic. An extent of continuity and stability among the changing state (infra)structure of popular music was secured through the people occupying positions in the program. For instance, Gergely Horváth, the previous head of MR2 and well-known as a presenter on the station during its "golden" years, became a member of the board of NKA's Hangfoglaló Program.

Besides its grants system, Hangfoglaló also organized various industry events, such as conferences and workshops, which integrated, in addition to musicians and their managers, a significant number and variety of music industry professionals. Some of the interviewed musicians saw these events as important networking spaces and, in some cases, strategically looked for roles that enabled them to become part of the system: one such role available to more established artists was that of a *mentor* to early-career musicians receiving grants.

> The way this works is, there is an official press event where they announce which bands have won, you go there, they invite the same 150 people they have on their list, they serve these canapés […]. I'm thinking, should I go, should I not, I don't give a fuck, but ok, I'm going this time because I'd been in the jury, I know which bands had won, I'll go, there'll be food. The food is always good. I'm talking to the other jury members […] they say, yeah, I've already put my hands on [a band]—you've done what? They're coming to my label [and so on] … ah, so this is what this event is about! […] "Hi, these sandwiches are nice. Listen, who decides about mentors?" "Well it's [head of Hangfoglaló] Zsolt Bajnai." "Hello, Zsolt! You know, I've been approached by two bands, because they know us and how it was for us last year [when my band had won a grant], they asked for advice, and I'm happy to give it, but this is probably exactly what the mentor role is about, what if I became a mentor too?" "Good idea. Send me an email." "Thank you"—and I was headed back home, I realized that this is what the whole thing is about, it looks like a pleasant talk, but everyone has their [target person] there. (interview with a 33-year-old male musician, January 30, 2019)

Mentorship is a paid position in the program, meaning it provides income in addition to symbolic capital, which explains its sought-after status. The interview excerpt also provides a glimpse into how CsTP/Hangfoglaló established its own industry networking spaces, interspersing and incorporating established formal and informal industry networks and institutions. This network effectively drew in early-career bands and artists with the promise of resources and opportunities, while simultaneously retaining more established musicians and integrating professionals who could count on the pool of new artists upon whom to capitalize.

According to the ProArt 2017 Music Industry Report, in 2016, 23% of songwriters or composers and 32% of performing musicians applied for state grants, which, in 92% of the cases, meant CsTP or other state grants (ProArt 2017, 13). Although this implies that it is still a minority that makes use of these state-provided resources, the interviews suggest that it is possible to outline

a relatively well-definable segment of musicians overrepresented in grants applications and awards: these are typically Budapest-based, singer-songwriter, rock and pop-rock acts, with some metal, jazz, and hip hop performers. Electronic musicians agreed that their genre was excluded on a cultural and social value basis from the program: "[electronic music] is not visible [for the state], there is no support" (interview with a 33-year-old electronic musician and promoter, November 11, 2019); "NKA is not interested in what is labeled as this drug-infused electronic music scene—it is interested in bands" (interview with a 31-year-old electronic musician and promoter, April 23, 2019). The acts receiving grants tend to actively play gigs, to already have some audience, although its size varies. A member of the NKA's popular music board explained: "It definitely supports the music scene that you would have been able to hear on Radio Petőfi in a different era. That is partly why it had been set up."[12]

During the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic and crisis, these artists looked upon NKA grants as important, planned sources of income that funded their albums (typical sums awarded were 200 thousand- to 500 thousand-forint grants [510 to 1280 euros] for writing, which could be multiplied if more than one member of a band applied), music videos (max. 500 thousand forints) or tours. In effect, these grants play a similar role to advances granted by record labels in the global core. Although they hardly allow musicians to take time off from their "day jobs" (the sum varies from one to two months' minimum wage), it helps them with production costs. As an artist put it: "These three letters [NKA] mean an awful lot in the life of a Hungarian band" (interview with a 36-year-old male musician, April 12, 2018). Another musician claimed that without state grants, "Hungarian acts would die" (interview with a 32-year-old female musician, June 12, 2018). "God knows I've always been left-wing [...], but popular musicians have not had a better support system than NKA. The fact that you can get 2 million forints as a beginner band to do an album, which is otherwise five years of toil or an investment, this is totally unique and fucking great," said a third artist, alluding to the irony of benefitting from a right-wing government scheme against his ideological beliefs (interview with a 33-year-old male musician, January 30, 2019). A music manager and organizer also highlighted the importance of the grants system:

> What I saw was that the market-based support [sponsorship] of popular music greatly decreased, parallel to this, however, NKA grants and any additional sources became really valuable. I remember that we used to sometimes apply for an NKA grant, but only if we remembered, and now one of the most important tasks of [my colleague] is to constantly keep us up-to-date with what grants are available. (interview with a 39-year-old female manager, February 4, 2019)

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12   I do not give details of the interview here to protect anonymity.

At the same time, several musicians from outside of Budapest—thus outside the geographical center of the Hungarian music industries—told me that they had never applied. They typically cited the assumption of not standing a chance without a network (thus social capital) or felt insecure regarding the grant application process, which they considered too complicated to handle on their own: "To write such an application, the whole thing's so bureaucratic, it's so rigid, whether you get it or not really does not depend on how talented you are or how much you want it, but rather whether you know someone who can help you with it" (interview with a 33-year-old female musician from a county town, April 11, 2019). Many Budapest-based musicians in fact made use of professional grant writers: for instance, the employee of a publishing company was mentioned as having written "grants for all of the bands ... well, many, many bands" (interview with a 36-year-old male musician, April 12, 2018), and a musician also made additional income by writing "four or five hundred applications a year" for others (interview with a 33-year-old male musician, January 30, 2019). On the one hand, the emergence and involvement of professional grant writers, including musicians who have gained experience in writing applications, indicates the growth of an entire NKA-based industry network and infrastructure within the space of just a few years. On the other hand, the example of the grant-writer musician, who also acted as jury member and mentor in the grants system, clearly shows how certain artists were able to gain (sub)cultural and social capital (Bourdieu 1986; Thornton 1995). These include skills specific to the industry, the grants system, and a network within this subfield, which these workers may use for their own benefit, directly in the form of grants and indirectly in the form of additional income as a writer, mentor, and jury member, leading to the accumulating further social capital.

Many of those artists—Budapest-based, middle-class, typically with university degrees—who wrote their own grants had become so used to handing in applications on a regular basis that it had become a routine:

> From what I can see, during the previous years, a system has emerged with NKA that is relatively easy to [enter]; you don't need a lot of creativity to write an application. It's relatively straightforward, I don't have to bullshit a lot [...], and I'm on a level that I often get the funding. [...] I'm a successful applicant 80 percent of the time. (interview with a 32-year-old male musician, April 25, 2016)

Or: "I'm not saying I've won all the time, but almost all the time. [...] I was thinking, I'll hand in loads [of applications], and the worst that can happen is I don't win. But why shouldn't I hand them in?" (interview with a 32-year-old female musician, June 12, 2018). This effortless routine may be contrasted with the lack of confidence shown by the quoted musician from one of the larger towns of Hungary: in her case, the idea of the grants system itself highlighted

her perceived lack of social and cultural capital in comparison with more embedded musicians. Moreover, as some musicians pointed out, handing in a grant has costs, therefore also requires economic capital:

> I remember, the manager of someone I know said: listen, you have to apply for everything [...] and then something's gonna happen. But it's not the same if you have a management behind you that has the cash, you pay for three applications and none of them work. That's minus 30000 forints, which is tough if you live from month to month. (interview with a 34-year-old female singer, songwriter, band leader, January 22, 2019)

As illustrated by the above-quoted musician who professed to be left-wing, but nevertheless fully endorsed the funding program, the political significance of making use of the grants system introduced by the Orbán government tended to be downplayed, and there was little moral judgment or questioning attached to the grants or applying for them articulated in the interviews. This attitude may be contrasted with symbolic actions in connection with Fidesz's incorporation of prestigious institutions in the more—in a Bourdieusian sense—"autonomous" subfields of art, such as the fine arts or the literary subfield. For example, following the incorporation of the Hungarian Academy of Arts (Magyar Művészeti Akadémia, MMA),[13] a group called Free Artists (Szabad Művészek) formed to oppose the empowerment of MMA (András 2014) and protested against the MMA taking over the Műcsarnok (Kunsthalle) contemporary art exhibition space in 2012 (Urfi 2012). Similarly, the group United for Contemporary Art was formed "[i]n response to the nontransparent process behind the appointment of a new director at the Ludwig Museum," which they occupied in 2013 (András 2014, para. 16). After the change in MMA's status, many art workers began boycotting the institution's generous scholarships (even towards the end of the decade; Nagy and Szarvas 2021), and accepting one equated with risking symbolic capital in the art subfield, which viewed MMA as illegitimate (Barna et al. 2019, 245). In a similar manner, several writers refused the János Térey scholarship issued by a similarly "occupied" Petőfi Literary Museum (Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, PIM) (Kovács 2020). In music, no comparable symbolic actions accompanied the transformation of state financing. Rather, in the majority of the interviews, the mentioned pragmatic, realist view prevailed, the sense that state funding was a necessity: "I don't really see how this could currently be done differently in Hungary" (interview with a 39-year-old female manager, February 4, 2019).

Where explicit criticism was voiced, it was aimed at, firstly, the selective supporting of artists: some interview subjects named musicians who are openly supportive of the regime and its conservative ideology, such as the mentioned

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[13] In 2011, the government elevated the MMA to the position of a public institution and enshrined its status in the constitution (Nagy and Szarvas 2021, 218).

Ákos or veteran rock band Edda Művek, receiving unusually high amounts. "Something that many have strongly criticized, and I think they're absolutely right, is why Ákos gets 5 million forints for his gig in London when [recognized jazz artist] Veronika Harcsa only gets 300 thousand" (interview with a 30-year-old male singer-songwriter, January 23, 2019). Or, as another interviewee put it: "An early-career band, us, for example, gets 500 thousand forints, and Attila Pataky got 2 million five hundred thousand forints—what for? We felt, why does a band like Edda that makes three times that amount with just one gig, need this?" (interview with a 36-year-old male musician, April 12, 2018). Explicit refusal to apply for the grants on a political basis was only expressed by a punk musician, in line with the "subcultural ideal" (Hodkinson 2002, 76–80) of the punk scene that strives towards independence, and with the fact that the punk musicians are the most explicitly political in Hungarian popular music. In addition, from a material perspective, making music was little more than a serious passion to this musician, her main source of income being non-musical work.

In contrast with the underground, among the segment of musicians outlined above, the program had established relations of dependency within a short period of time. Moreover, in addition to musicians, other industry actors such as music venues, which can directly participate in the program, along with music management companies or independent record labels, who can indirectly profit from it, were also counting on state-provided funds when planning a tour or the recording of an album. An incident narrated by a singer and songwriter illustrates the way in which the representative of a corporate actor attempted to use musicians as a "secret" proxy to get hold of funds by luring the musician to them and thus channeling the resources to their company:

> [The head of a record company] called from [a] record label saying, "there's this grant, you really should apply." "Thanks, I was thinking of applying anyway, okay, I will." But that was it, [I only said,] "Okay, I will apply." And afterwards he began approaching me, [saying] "well, did you win some money?" I said, "yes, *I* did." And afterwards, I was like, "oh God, Jesus ..." (interview with a 31-year-old female singer-songwriter, June 7, 2018)

The final sentence expresses the musician's realization that the company had wanted to use her based on her potential to win a grant, in other words, the label owner's attempt to treat her like property even though there was no formal business relationship between them, only acquaintanceship. She even described feeling like "prey" in the "jungle" of the music industries, with various industry players acting as predators hunting for the resources provided by the state.

Precarity resulting from the sluggishness and unpredictability of state bureaucracy also accompanied this dependence. The musician quoted above also narrated an instance when, while she was contracted to a record label, they had

to postpone the recording of her album by six months, because the disbursement of the grant she had won for the creation of the album was delayed for that length of time due to internal institutional restructuring. The delay caused unprecedented material uncertainty in the artist's life, she hardly managed to support herself:

> Since everything hinged on this [source of money] ... that was really tough. That was the first time, really, when I had to borrow money for my living expenses, it was that bad. And you didn't know whether that money would be paid at all. Okay, in theory, I have money, but ... that was total existential insecurity, it was the worst [time] ... just as things had taken off. (interview with a 31-year-old female singer-songwriter, June 7, 2018)

Moreover, such state structures have an inherent fragility due to their contingency upon political shifts, such as changes in people in charge (including ministers or secretaries of state, as well as below) or reorganizing institutions.

In addition, returning to the issue of the radio, although the Cseh Tamás and Hangfoglaló programs may be viewed as a continuation of Radio Petőfi's policy between 2007 and 2012, the relationship between the state support of artists and public service media is unclear. The question implicitly present in musicians' criticism of the radio is why public service radio no longer supports the segment of—mainly rock-based—artists supported by NKA, primarily popularized by the radio station in the first place before the launching of the program. According to some musicians as well as other industry workers, a lack of harmonizing public service radio programming with the popular music program of the NKA[14] prevents the latter's long-term success and undermines the otherwise beneficial opportunities and results of the program. In other words, these actors view NKA grants and the talent contests organized as part of the program as pointless—money out the window—without the support of radio plays. The most plausible explanation is that instead of a coherent cultural policy regarding popular music, there are various actors in the field with their own particular sets of interests, their strategies uncoordinated (c.f. Barna et al. 2019, 247).

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[14] It needs to be mentioned that in 2015, a service called Petőfi TV, aimed at young people and focusing on music and other forms of popular culture, was launched on the Hungarian Television channel M2, occupying the slot between 8 p.m. to 12 p.m. The match between artists featured on the channel in the form of interviews and gigs recorded on the live music boat venue A38 and those participating in the Hangfoglaló Program is much bigger than in the case of MR2 radio. However, the viewership of M2 Petőfi is fairly low compared to the popularity of radio: for example, in 2019, its audience ratio was 0.5% both among the general population and the target age group of 18–39 (MTVA 2020, 34), making the channel the second to last TV channel in popularity within the 20 most popular TV channels listed (33). In contrast, MR2 Radio Petőfi was the second most popular radio with a 17.8% audience ratio in the general population and 19.4% in the 18–49 age group, making up an audience of 1.273 million (40). Moreover, none of the interviewed musicians or other music industry workers alluded to the channel's significance.

Based on the program, the vision of NKA and the music industry actors shaping it can be described as popular music made by recording and performing pop-rock bands, who take positions in a hierarchical, competitive star system with clear career steps. As the interviewed member of the board explained the principle behind the various subprograms:

> We try to think in terms of a career path for bands: what are the stages a band can reach? Because there are steps. They begin to play music, they enter talent contests, […] enter the early-career band sub-program. This is the entry point at Hangfoglaló. This means 2 million forints in funding; they write songs and create a music video.[15]

The consistent reference to "bands" in this description in a self-evident manner is also indicative of the genre bias—the "rockism"—of the program and Hungarian popular music policy in general. The board member continues outlining Hangfoglaló's life career model thus:

> Radio stations will start to play [the songs] at one point, if they do, or they would have done [in previous times]. Then [the band] will start playing gigs, they'll have some sort of success, which will either continue to grow or not, depending on both radio airplay and the opportunities to play gigs. And then [the public service television talent contest] The Song[16] appears on their horizon at some point and they either get in or they don't. That's a really big deal. […] The other [possibility] is [the talent contest] Nagy-szín-pad! [Main stage],[17] which is a test, an obstacle course towards the important festivals.

This ideal career path outlines the part state, part market-based infrastructure of the program, wherein musicians are expected to compete against each other through a series of "obstacles," with the most talented and fortunate getting the ultimate reward of either public service media exposure or the festival main stage.

On the one hand, the introduction of the Cseh Tamás Program was the first instance when popular music began to receive significant and wide-ranging state-level support since the end of state socialism. Therefore, many musicians and music industry workers appreciated this as a recognition of their work and were grateful for the resources that enabled them to at least attempt to pursue

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[15] As mentioned earlier, I do not provide details of the interview to protect anonymity.

[16] Between 2012 and 2019, the public service television program *A Dal* ("The Song") was the official talent show where the country's Eurovision Song Contest entrant was selected. In 2020, Hungary stopped sending contestants to Eurovision and since then, the program has functioned as a regular television talent contest.

[17] Jointly organized by Volt Festival (Norbert Lobenwein) and Radio Petőfi. Contestants are invited based on their existing performance on the live music circuit, and participants get invitations to the major music festivals, with the winner gaining the opportunity of a main stage gig at these events. The contest was heavily criticized by several musicians I interviewed for being "rigged" and the winner selected in advance.

their careers, rather than interpreting it as a restriction on their autonomy. This contradicts the anti-state definition of autonomy arguably prevailing in the intellectual elite of the Hungarian art world. Regarding this elite, Ágnes Gagyi and Márton Szarvas observe that the Hungarian reception of the critique of neoliberalism, "according to its own distinctive characteristics, inverts the role of the market and the state" and criticizes state policies instead of the marketisation of art (Gagyi and Szarvas 2016, 127). Gagyi and Szarvas attribute the lack of the presence of an ethos of independence relying on the state to the fact that in Hungary, the historical experience of state intervention aimed at the content of cultural production had become an integral part of the intellectual epistemology of the country (127). This criticism was not strongly present in the popular music world, which may be explained by the different (lower) social position of both the subfield and its actors. During the COVID-19 pandemic, as I show below, however, a marked shift could be observed in this regard, leading to an, at least temporary, politicization of some music industry workers.

At the same time, the workers' experiences also indicated that the funding program had established a new dependency on the state that, firstly, favors those with sufficient cultural and social capital specific to the Budapest-centered music industry network, and is inaccessible or ineffective, especially in the long run, for the rest of the society of musicians and music industry workers. Secondly, that it is selective to certain preferred artists on an ideological and political basis; and thirdly, that it is a fragile system due to its contingency upon political shifts, which contributes to musicians' precarity. These developments point to the state incorporation of a popular music subfield and the establishment of a relation of direct state dependency. The presented dynamics, at the same time, also indicate that this incorporation effect is complicated and mitigated by the lack of coordination among various groups of interest on the part of the state.

Creative Autonomy, the State, and the COVID-19 Crisis

The first COVID-19 lockdown period, announced on March 11, 2020, arrived with a total ban on live music events.[18] Unlike many Western European countries (like Germany or the Netherlands [Blumenreich 2021; Boekman Foundation 2021]), in Hungary, the government did not introduce any industry-wide support measures, although self-employed workers received some indirect

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[18]   Some of the empirical results presented in this section were first published in Barna and Blaskó (2021).

compensation in the form of tax relief. In addition to a lack of support, the government also actively cut down on local cultural production by withdrawing funds from local councils with reference to the crisis. A musician made this observation with regard to the funding of a local choir where he sang: "We had an association meeting [for members] not so long ago, and they told us we got the usual amount of funding at the beginning of the year, but then the virus came and the state took loads of money from local councils, so where do they take that money from, of course it's culture" (interview with a 57-year-old male trumpet player, July 22, 2020). NKA, Artisjus, and the Performer's Rights Protection Association Office (EJI) supported some musicians in the form of grants for which musicians could apply, but behind-the-scenes workers were not included among the potential recipients at this point (later, in October, the Petőfi Literary Museum introduced a government-financed support scheme aimed at behind-the-scenes live music workers [Pim.hu 2020b]). As mentioned in my introductory chapter, the awarding of these grants and the circulation of the names of the supported artists generated substantial media attention, including social media posts and debates, which engaged with the issues of the deservingness of well-known musicians of government support and the responsibility of the state to support artists. Solidarity-based decisions regarding applying for funding, or rather opting not to do so, were present among the musicians I interviewed: "We didn't apply [for an Artisjus grant] because we thought, as one of the most hired performing artist couples, it may not be the best idea to stand in line saying, listen, give us some [money], even if we'd just renovated the house and had no money left" (interview with a 39-year-old female musician, July 10, 2020). "I also got the call for applications, I didn't register because I thought people in a much worse situation than me need this a hundred times more than I do" (interview with a 36-year-old male composer, songwriter, and instrumentalist, July 9, 2020). With the lack of unconditional support the previously mentioned professional bodies left it to artists to decide amongst themselves whether they considered themselves in need, or deserving, of a grant, and the public to judge artists for their decisions.

Support was, in some cases, directly linked to the production of right-wing government ideology. The "Köszönjük, Magyarország!" ("Thank you, Hungary") program was launched by the Petőfi Literary Museum, headed by Szilárd Demeter. It offered grants to composers competing by writing works addressing the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Trianon, June 4, 2020 (Pim.hu 2020a). The maximum amount that could be won was a gross of 300 thousand forints (approximately 764 euros), with a total framework of 10 million forints (approximately 25,800 euros) for composers (the grant was also available for writers, poets, and dramaturgs). To place the task into context, the reframing of memory politics had been a priority in the establishment of the ideological foundations

of the "System of National Cooperation." The anniversary of the Treaty that sealed the loss of two-thirds of Hungary's territories in 1920 is a highly significant and symbolic date for the political right, linked to the idea of an ethnicity-based nation. An ethnically defined nationhood formed the basis of one of the first important political measures of the second Orbán government in 2010, namely the introduction of a simplified process for acquiring Hungarian citizenship for Hungarians in neighboring countries, later extended to include the right to vote (Barna and Patakfalvi-Czirják 2022a, 336). The support of artists through this competition was therefore directly channeled into the production of ideology supporting the political regime.

The restrictions were partly lifted during the summer period: from June 1, music events with up to 500 participants were permitted nationwide. The government named August 15 as a potential date to lift remaining restrictions, which meant that those festivals that had not been definitely cancelled were conditionally moved to the second half of August. On July 30, it was announced that restrictions would remain in place. As social media activity and our sociodrama events conducted at the time both clearly indicated, this uncertainty caused widespread unrest and frustration among musicians and music industry workers over the course of July 2020. As a sociodrama participant—a sound technician from a university town—put it at the beginning of August as part of his self-introduction: "More than half a year ago we lost our profession, some of us our entire livelihood, some of us part of it" (sociodrama 6, August 4, 2020). Online campaigns were initiated to show musicians' desire to work (e.g., the *#zenélnénk* [we would (like to) play music] social media campaign) and to emphasize the value of work that was less in the foreground (e.g., the *#coVideo* campaign, was aimed at making visible the largely invisible labor of live music technicians). In addition to economic hardship, the mental health of artists also received some media publicity. For example, rapper Tamás Karácson, known as Tomi Fluor of the hugely popular duo Wellhello, published a social media post about his psychological difficulties, connecting them with the daily toil of a musician's work. He framed this in response to the aforementioned frequent calls from the general public during the COVID-19 crisis for musicians to stop moaning and to find a "real job" (Blonszki 2020).

During the same period, Szilárd Demeter, who was not only the head of PIM, but also an openly ideologically aligned supporter of Fidesz, was awarded a new position as Ministerial Commissioner for the Renewal of Hungarian Popular Music on June 20, 2020. In this role, he shortly released a detailed five-year strategy for popular music, compiled with the help of music industry experts. Even though the appointment of Demeter himself was debated among musicians and music industry workers on the grounds of his political commitment and position, the strategy itself was welcomed by many across the industry. Later,

when the government music industry support scheme was finally announced on August 5, the so-called Raktárkoncertek ("Warehouse Gigs") program, with a generous-sounding 15-million-euro (5.3 billion forints) budget, it came as a surprise to many that it apparently sidestepped not only Demeter, but also the Hangfoglaló Program, the Music Hungary Association, and other music industry groups in favor of the Hungarian Tourist Agency as organizer, in addition to commissioning the technological firm Antenna Hungária, closely associated with the government, for the technical implementation of the event series (Sajó 2020b). The program enabled 300 acts, selected from three main, roughly genre-based groups ("festival acts," "living legends," and "folk musicians") to perform at a warehouse venue without an audience. The performances were recorded and released on an online platform (Raktarkoncert.hu, operated by Antenna Hungária's mindiGO TV platform), and the participating musicians were to receive an outsized performance fee. Norbert Lobenwein, the previously mentioned organizer of Volt and several other music festivals, was appointed as the person responsible for selecting acts for the festival category, which reinforced his already powerful music industry gatekeeping position along with his political capital. The program was highly divisive within as well as outside of the industry and sparked intense (social) media debates. The principles of inclusion and exclusion were widely questioned. Many participating artists, on the other hand, openly embraced the gig as an opportunity. Some bands publicly announced that they would distribute their fees among their broader team, hand over the entire amount to a different band in more need of financial support or to a fund that was set up to give succor to behind-the-scenes workers. As the program progressed, however, there were complaints of bands receiving less than they expected, in two instalments, with delays (Sajó 2020b).

In the following year, the Őszi Hacacáré ("Autumn Spree") program followed a similar logic, this time securing performance opportunities for bands and artists in front of live audiences across the country—although targeting mainly Fidesz-led towns. The performances created an opportunity for local Fidesz politicians to take their photos with the artists in the months preceding the Spring 2022 elections (Sajó 2021a). A manager explicitly explained that she viewed talking to and appearing with Fidesz politicians as an unwritten obligation if one accepts state funding and that she considered managers who complained about such practices as unprofessional.

> If there is, let's say, an opportunity to perform at a government-backed national-level political … no, not political, sorry. But [an event] supported by the government under the slogan "let's save the performers," and let's say the manager doesn't pay attention and doesn't read the part in the contract where it says that the performer, if they want to, if they are okay with it, and if the local [MP] is there … it is not compulsory, but it is an unwritten rule. We [should] go and give interviews and go and have our photos

taken, because nobody can be stupid enough [to think] that if they accept government funding, they [do not] have [the obligation] to do that, they have to go out and get their photos taken with the mayor. Now, anyone who accepts this but is still being a pain in the neck, well, that's the kind of person who will get themselves written off in the profession. It is happening, these kinds of things are happening. (interview with a 42-year-old female manager, January 31, 2022)

Professionality in the case of a manager from this perspective equated with securing opportunities for the client, regardless of considerations of autonomy from politics—very directly, as independence from political actors and the government's pre-election campaign. The manager correcting herself at the beginning of the excerpt—"no, not political"—is again a paradoxical denial of the political character of such events, similarly to the above-quoted sound engineer talking about the Tusványos festival.

Even though certain politically embedded actors were able to utilize the situation to gain further ground in terms of (economic) capital accumulation (Antenna Hungária) or to exercise power arising from their social and symbolic capital (Lobenwein and other actors fulfilling gatekeeping positions), the program still left the majority of artists and behind-the-scenes workers without support. In neoliberal fashion, the scheme let workers absorb the costs of the crisis. For survival, the workers relied on non-musical "day jobs"—pre-existing or new ones—their savings, if they had any, and what Dunaway (2012) describes as a reorganization of the household work portfolio and the reallocation of household resources. As a technician observed: "[...] for instance, if both members of a couple are music industry workers, that means they are done. Neither of them has had any work this year. At least one should have a [non-music] job" (male sound technician from a large town, focus group 9, December 17, 2020).[19] Based on our data, live music technicians, in particular, were forced to find new, non-music jobs: these included assembly line work at the Bosch factory in Miskolc; an SSC (shared services center) in Budapest (in this case, the technician already had this job before the pandemic, but it enabled him to continue making money); and a territorial defense reserve soldier doing border service (focus group 8, December 4, 2020).

During the first online sociodrama group held after the announcement of the restrictions during the first wave of COVID-19 (sociodrama 3, May 13, 2020), the participants—a male promoter, a female tour manager and communication manager, and a PR manager at a larger music venue (see Appendix 3 for more details)—placed the pandemic situation at the center of the drama based on a consensus shared by the researchers (Ágnes Blaskó, who led the drama, and myself) and the participants. The participants' response to the crisis, enacted

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[19] I discuss such strategies and how they are embedded in gender relations in detail in chapter 4.

in the drama, turned out to be an attempt to map the playing field to answer the question of how to survive.[20] There were few direct references to political influence in the pandemic context in the drama, although in one instance, the above-mentioned Treaty of Trianon-themed "Köszönjük, Magyarország!" grant program was referred to with sarcasm (sociodrama 3, May 13, 2020). In addition, the figure of Demeter also kept recurring in the dramas. In the fourth pandemic-time drama, he was even included in an imagined ideal scenario drawn up by participants with the aim of finding a solution to the crisis of the industry (sociodrama 6, August 4, 2020). Although including him initially emerged as a joke, ultimately, the participants justified it by arguing that "it was better to have him there so that we're able to consult him in the first round," and perhaps exert some influence on him (sociodrama 6, August 4, 2020). Demeter had only recently been appointed to a representative position in the popular music field, yet his perceived position appeared unquestioned. However, except for the one reference to the Trianon Treaty-themed grant, he and his gatekeeping position were not directly criticized from an ideological control perspective, but rather on the basis of his lack of specific music industry experience, expertise, and reputation—key resources in the popular music field. As a manager expressed during the reflection phase, in conclusion: "[We need] people [to represent us] who work actively in the industry, not some Szilárd Demeter, who … I don't even know who that is, I'm sorry" (sociodrama 6, August 4, 2020).

In order to consider more general representations of the state—as opposed to explicit political actors—I want to first consider the pre-pandemic, offline sociodrama events (held on December 11, 2019, and February 19, 2020). In the first case, the drama thematized power relations and autonomy in the music industries, and in the second case, "behind-the-scenes" in the music industries. The three participants of the mentioned third, online drama had already participated in the first two, alongside others. On both occasions, naming actors deemed to be influential in the music industries and then bringing them into play were central elements of the play phase. In the pre-pandemic dramas, the main representatives of the state evoked by the participants were "the radio" and "cultural policy," both represented and enacted in the play phase as being far removed from both industry actors and popular music audiences. Thus, they came to be defined through their distance and lack of expertise pertaining to the functioning of the music industries and the popularizing of music culture—in

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[20]   During the main drama phase, three routes of action were outlined by the participants as post-pandemic scenarios potentially available to them. These were drawn up on a virtual whiteboard; the participants then "walked" the routes through a so-called *walk and talk* technique (Garcia and Sternberg [1989] 2000, 67). During the walk, participants chose a role, then explained their actions and enacted their thoughts and feelings along the way. All important factors that were mentioned were simultaneously recorded by the group on the whiteboard as a drawing or inscription.

a similar way to Szilárd Demeter during the pandemic-time dramas. "Cultural policy" as an actor, moreover, embodied a conservative cultural hierarchy (this was emphasized through sarcastic references to classical music). Moreover, references to the NKA-based support system entered the play phase at relatively late points in both dramas, and—somewhat counter-intuitively, given the importance attributed to it during many of my interviews preceding the drama—the Fund was not embodied as a central factor in the music industry field of power.

In contrast, in the first pandemic-time drama, the role and responsibility of the state and the government (the participants used the two interchangeably) received significant emphasis as factors either enabling the music industry workers embodied in the play phase to complete a particular imaginary route, or as contributing to the destruction of the industry—a potential scenario projected in the (not necessarily distant) future. The state was predominantly represented as an agent potentially failing to act in a way that would protect the interests of the industry and its workers. Although direct references were made to the government's actions regarding the pandemic, such as the pandemic-time restrictions, their timing and communication, and the forms of support (mostly, the lack thereof), many of the statements were extended to the role and responsibility of the state in relation to the industry in general. This is, therefore, a significantly stronger attribution of agency to the state than in the pre-pandemic dramas. The shift of agency could also be traced in the group's reference to a symbolic object—a bottle of Unicum, a Hungarian brand of liquor[21]—which was continuous through the first three events, although the meaning changed. During the pre-pandemic events, the object symbolized the "Hungarian economy" and was accepted as a given, disadvantageous—implicitly, in comparison with western economies—contextual feature. However, during the first pandemic-time event, when drawn on the whiteboard, the same object came to be referred to, with an automatic shift, as "the state" and embodied the actor towards which participants voiced their expectations.

During the pandemic, the relation to the state received the most attention in the first (May 13, 2020) and fourth (August 4, 2020) online drama groups. The participants articulated their expectations from the state concerning its redistributive function: arguing that if the state had, at other times, "taken" from the industry in the form of taxes and "spreading onto everything"—that is, extending its strategy of incorporation—then it has an obligation to give back to the industry at a time of crisis (sociodrama 3, May 13, 2020). There was, in other words, an acknowledgement, and only very implicit criticism, of the active influence of the state on the sphere of popular music, dominantly as a beneficiary

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[21]   In the first two dramas, participants were able to use physical objects to represent the actors and some of their attributes, in the online drama, this was done through drawing on the virtual whiteboard.

through tax policy. Yet, this was strongly linked to the unfulfilled expectation of assuming responsibility for the sector through care and support, expressed in metaphorical language: "Everyone has let go of our hands." Behind the metaphorical language, moreover, is the very material reality of the aforementioned loss of work and income, as well as—as the participants made it clear during both drama occasions—professional identity, resulting in an existential crisis for many.

At the same time, during the fourth online drama, the participants also arrived at a consensus that a free market would be desirable. Desirable market relations were frequently alluded to as "healthy competition," as exemplified by Western European countries such as the UK, Germany, or the Netherlands, frequently cited as positive cases, as opposed to what participants portrayed as the demoralizing, divisive competition in Hungary. Competition itself was acknowledged as present in Hungary, just as in the West, as an unquestioned reality; however, the difference between "good" and "bad" competition was also implied, with Hungary—in general, and the Hungarian "music industry"— exemplifying the latter. In accordance with an "Eastern European tradition," as the drama participants both before and during the pandemic phrased it, the same people always profit; "the game is rigged," and industry players fight over small amounts of money: musicians are "dragged through the mud" for amounts like 160 000 forints (sociodrama 3, May 13, 2020). The latter opinion was voiced during the May 13, 2020 drama and is a direct reference to the maximum amount paid out by the application-based COVID-19 support scheme of Artisjus and EJI, which, as mentioned above, was a much-debated topical issue in the media at the time. During the drama, the inequality of opportunities, the implied corruption, the lack of fairness, coupled with the lack of sufficient resources, were thus framed within internalized moral geopolitics (Böröcz 2006), wherein Hungary is perceived to be "lagging behind" in relation to the superior West in a perceived linear process of development, wherein it is at least theoretically possible to "catch up." This symbolic opposition, moreover, was already present during the pre-pandemic occasions: for instance, the state (including local councils) financing free events such as town or village days, which constitute a significant part of musicians' live performance opportunities, appeared as an obstacle to a "healthy" market, which would be represented by the presence of a paying audience (sociodrama 2, February 19); the "market distortion" effect of state funding was a recurring verbal topos (not only in the dramas, but also in individual interviews).

Compared with the first two, pre-pandemic drama occasions, the state and the government received not only more emphasis, but were also attributed more agency in the drama events conducted amongst the COVID-19 restrictions. Negative attitudes towards the state emphasized bureaucracy, the

impersonality of power, and the state "taking but not giving" at a time of crisis. The positive scenario involved accepting a model close to a welfare state that would protect the industry and its workers, but without imposing selective principles that would (further) divide the industry, and only to the extent that workers and institutions could function with the help of such provision of resources in a relatively autonomous and independent manner. Nevertheless, the groups drew on the image of a liberal, free-market state as an ideal model, which tended to be associated with Western countries and their music industries. Through this, the participants reproduced the moral geopolitics of an unequal capitalist world-system.

Furthermore, the separation of the market from the (Fidesz) government and politics was an explicit element of the definition of moral integrity (from a worker perspective) in the first pandemic-time drama. When discussing potential coping strategies for surviving the crisis, participants drew a clear line between getting a job with a multinational corporation while remaining in the industry (for instance, a major record label or a live entertainment corporation), which was not problematic morally, and accepting a job with a "National So-and-So" institution (referring the Fidesz's tendency of naming and renaming institutions with the "national" attribute, among them the newly established cultural institutions after 2010). This is indicative of politicization; the temporary relinquishment of the dominant strategic apoliticism which can be closely compared to, in a moral sense, the threat of "selling out" but which is nonetheless articulated differently in this local context in contrast to the creativity-versus-commerce paradigm that is documented in western-based accounts. As opposed to the logic of capital, it makes implicit reference to the threat of incorporation in the specific context of the so-called "System of National Cooperation," while leaving the capitalist logic of the industry uncontested. This signifies a clear shift from pre-pandemic times, where the anti-state definition of autonomy, more prevalent in the intellectual elite of the Hungarian art world and in "higher" spheres of artistic production, was less characteristic of the popular music field.

Gatekeeping, Gender Relations, and Digital Entrepreneurship

I have observed that the supporting scheme established by the government, with the contribution of music industry professionals employing positions within the Cseh Tamás/Hangfoglaló Program, is constructed around, and in turn reinforces, a star system, wherein bands and artists compete with each other in

a hierarchical field, and wherein the positions of supporting institutions (such as labels or management) and behind-the-scenes workers (such as technicians) are also determined by the position of the artists with whom they work.[22] The program's promise to applicants is that they may gain additional resources that will give them an advantage over others and help them climb the hierarchy ladder. Despite the previously mentioned interest of record labels in grant-winning artists, the interviews conducted also made it evident that the grants may aid a Do-It-Yourself mode of working, where the intermediary function of a record label is rendered unnecessary: "I have two albums, in both cases, the winning [strategy] became self-releasing them, completely self-financed, well, NKA- plus self-financed. The same is true for music videos" (interview with a 32-year-old male singer-songwriter, April 25, 2018). DIY here is understood as a practice of making use of digital tools that enable the artist to control an array of tasks that, prior to digitalization, would have required resources and material in the form of professional skills and knowledge provided by music companies such as record labels. This practice, however, is not necessarily accompanied by the ethics and politics of DIY as associated with underground or alternative music scenes. As Ellis Jones observes, "DIY today *is* mainstream" (Jones 2021, 2), it is "the new default" (7), and there is at least a "surface-level compatibility between DIY ethics and social media logics" (9) (and it could be added, the logics of digital media platforms in general).

The political incorporation outlined in the previous sections has placed extra pressure on musicians to promote themselves on digital platforms and build audiences that can be transformed into live music crowds. An additional factor that pushes musicians, in particular women, towards taking their careers into their own hands is the unequal gender relations and the specific sexist practices in which these are manifested, which complicate participation in the live music sphere.[23] Festival promoters, as I argued above, had emerged as key music industry gatekeepers in Hungary during the decade preceding the research. Being friendly, or at least acquainted with these gatekeepers, which musicians often applied as a conscious strategy, was deemed crucial in gaining access to live performances, whether on the festival or the club scene. "If there is no personal connection, it is not possible [to get gigs]" (interview with a 34-year-old female singer, songwriter, band leader, January 22, 2019). Or, as another musician put it: "There is a group of people, from the radio director to the promoter of Sziget Festival, who decide what reaches people. If you treat these people as kings […], then they will be quick to accept you and will help you with anything" (interview with a 30-year-old male singer-songwriter, January 23, 2019).

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[22]   This was strongly confirmed by the focus group sessions, where drawing up the structure of the "music industry" was the first task for each group.
[23]   Some of the arguments made in this section were first presented in Barna (2022a).

Informal connections and personal networks were viewed and described as the most important resources overall for pursuing musical careers by the interview subjects: "personal connections as a resource" was the code occurring with the second highest frequency in the analysis of the semi-structured interviews (with 225 code occurrences[24]). However, informal occasions for reinforcing ties of friendship forming the basis of professional cooperation were typically described as conforming to masculine practices and forms of behavior, such as late-night "partying," drinking or taking drugs. A group of female technicians illustrated the gender double standard with regard to expected behavior at festivals as a workplace for men and for women in the following way:

> It hurts that a man can party their way throughout the entire thing if they want to. Of course, they won't be having sex throughout an entire festival season. But for them, it's collecting trophies, it's a source of pride. If a woman wanted to party, or just to live life with a little more freedom, that's shameful. (focus group 4, October 22, 2020)

The heteronormative male-dominated setup of the backstage area, where women would typically be perceived as "groupies," prevented one female musician from socializing with other musicians at the beginning of her career: "When, for instance, I asked to be let into backstage areas to meet musicians, I was regularly treated as if I was there to give a blow-job to whoever ... I was treated that way many times" (interview with a 31-year-old female singer-songwriter, June 6, 2018). In contrast, a male musician spoke about the backstage area as an important and supportive site for his early socialization into the rock music scene: "I was always trying [to hang out] in the backstage although [...] I was just a little kid looking at the bass guitar, but I was well-prepared, I had a good sense of rhythm and can keep time, and people just liked being around me, and I liked being around them" (interview with a 33-year-old male musician, January 30, 2019). Consequently, several female musicians in the study felt that as women—in some cases, represented by female managers—they were at a disadvantage in establishing and maintaining connections with gatekeepers: "To make matters worse, my manager is also a woman and [...] this industry is really awfully sexist" (interview with a 31-year-old female singer-songwriter, June 7, 2018).

Childcare responsibilities[25] also complicated women's participation in nighttime networking spaces. A female musician reflected on the power of informal networks by describing herself as an artist facing an invisible barrier as somebody who does not "smoke weed or party with these people, and anyway," she said, "I am just a mother with a baby" (interview with a 32-year-old female

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[24]   The code with the highest occurrence was "earning a living/finances" (320).
[25]   The relationship between motherhood, reproductive labor, and music careers are explored in detail in chapter 4.

singer-songwriter, June 12, 2018). Several scholars (e.g., Gill 2002; Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015; Wreyford 2015) have demonstrated that the predominance of informal networking in recruitment in the cultural industries contributes to reinforcing a patriarchal structure and racial and class inequalities. The mechanisms behind this "network sociality" (Wittel 2001) include the allocation of jobs, positions, and resources based on informal reputation, recommendation, and acquaintance. In music scenes that are already male-dominated, these mechanisms ensure that existing circles of favor—frequently referred to as "old boy's networks" (e.g., Gill 2002, 82)—and solidarity based on homophily prevail. The experiences of female musicians and behind-the-scenes workers confirm that the spaces of informal socialization tend to be spaces where they are less welcome, involving practices both riskier and costlier for them and, ironically, their reputation.

As a direct result of patriarchal social relations inscribed into the spaces and practices of professional networking, some female artists narrated home-based digital entrepreneurship and connecting with fans directly on Facebook or You-Tube as a safe haven. One female musician explained how her belief in the power of digital and online social media platforms strengthened after becoming disillusioned with three aspects of the Hungarian music industries: the lack of transparency and sexism of the live music scene, the lack of radio airplay for emerging Hungarian artists, and the perceived corruption of the state popular music funding scheme, competitions, and talent contests. Her experience, shared by many of the interviewed artists, was that the festival circuit and the radio relied heavily on informal networks that were inaccessible to her: "It is difficult to get through this festival mafia" (interview with a 31-year-old female singer-songwriter, June 7, 2018). To circumvent the perceived obstacles, she made use of social media and audience support by crowdfunding her videos and album premiere concert through Indiegogo, which enabled her to feel in control:

> I trust what has worked from the beginning, that my music reaches people and that way, it can survive. And there will be people I can play to, since they are what matters, and I am the media. […] There is festival corruption, and state corruption—and there is you. And you keep doing what you do anyway, and you can get through to people because you have the internet. (ibid.)

The musician recycles the slogan "we are the media," also used by the musician Amanda Palmer in her financially successful Kickstarter campaign, where she advocated for the independence of artists from record labels (Potts 2012); a case that is often cited in music industry literature as a model of autonomous success in the digital world of music.[26] Audience building via social media, however,

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[26]   This narrative, however, is problematic in more than one sense, as Taylor (2016, 124–26) demonstrates.

requires relentless "relational labor," as Nancy Baym describes it: "foster[ing] and sustain[ing] ongoing interaction" by being constantly available are aspects of the work of musicians that are "expected but rarely compensated" (Baym 2015, 1547). Such work is a form of emotional labor (Hochschild 1983), one that, as we will see in detail in the following three chapters, significantly contributes to the blurring of the boundaries between work and non-work, and the risk of self-exploitation and alienation.[27]

In the context of the UK, Haynes and Marshall (2018) speak of musicians as "reluctant" entrepreneurs to indicate the complicated relationship between musicians and entrepreneurship stemming from the tensions between creative autonomy and the capitalist logic of the cultural industries. In contrast with such narratives of "reluctant" or "accidental" (Coulson 2012) creative entrepreneurs of the global core, however, this Hungarian artist's view of social media and the—ostensibly—direct relationship between her and her audience is a narrative of not only autonomy, but also empowerment in which digital means appear as "pure" and opposed to the "corrupt" informal networks of the live music sector and the state funding program: "I'm for playing it pure. I mean, I realized that nobody around me is [involved in corruption], and my manager isn't either, and that's why we are a separate island" (interview with a 31-year-old female singer-songwriter, June 7, 2018).

Despite the emancipatory force of being able to circumnavigate the mentioned networks and gatekeepers, this stance also leads her and other artists to uncritically embrace an individualized entrepreneurial strategy and mindset that heavily relies on online platforms operated by powerful capitalist corporations, and a discourse that celebrates these without taking account of their logic of capital accumulation through the extraction of the free, or very cheap, labor of content producers, including musicians, and the free labor of their audiences (Fuchs 2014). In the case of YouTube, the idea of direct access obfuscates the complex role of the platform and its parent company Google in the power structure of the global music industries, including the lack of transparency in ranking content and monetization, or the geographical inequalities stemming from the platform's advertising policy, which favors content creators from the core. Streaming services have similarly contributed to reinforcing geographical inequalities (Tofalvy and Koltai 2023). The "extraordinary growth in competition" (Antal, 2020, 29) leaves small markets at a considerable disadvantage; for instance, according to Dániel Antal's calculation based on combined data from Apple Music, Spotify and Deezer, a typical—median—song in the UK earns about ten times more than on the Central and Eastern European markets (28).

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[27] At the same time, as I argue in chapter 5, fans may also provide resources and labor that significantly contribute to building musicians' careers.

In addition, artists complained about their vulnerability to regular Facebook policy changes and their decreasing control over communication with their followers on the platform due to these, especially if they do not have the means to pay regularly for advertising: "Reaching a large audience? For free! Hell no!"—said a well-known artist, citing the relatively large figure her team had spent on ads (interview with a 36-year-old female jazz singer, January 10, 2019).

Constructing the "Music Industry"

The analysis of the shifting structure of dependencies from the perspective of musical workers has outlined a specific, but in terms of representation, dominant segment of popular music. This segment includes musicians, and the music industry professionals working with them, who were supported and at the same time constituted by the public service radio station MR2 between 2007 and 2012, along with an extended industry network and infrastructure, in particular the emerging paying music festival scene. At the time, the latter was in a symbiotic relationship with public service radio, unlike later, at the time of the research. In terms of genre, this segment largely remains within the (pop-)rock music formal paradigm as Motti Regev defines it:

> [...] "pop-rock" refers to music consciously created and produced by using amplification, electric and electronic instruments, sophisticated recording equipment (including samplers), by employing certain techniques of supposedly untrained vocal delivery, mostly those signifying immediacy of expression and spontaneity, and by filtering all these through sound editing, modification, and manipulation devices. (Regev 2013, 18)

Regev also emphasizes that pop-rock is "culturally organized around a stylistic genealogy and a historical narrative for which the emergence of the rock'n'roll style in the mid-1950s in the United States serves as a mythical moment of 'birth' (Peterson 1990)" (18), and that stemming from creative exploration as well as the commercial interests of the industry, the pop-rock aesthetic is characterized by a drive towards constant stylistic innovation and a resulting hybridity and "cross-fertilization between styles and periods" (19). In addition to these characteristics, the segment in question in the Hungarian context is dominated by the (small) band setup (typically four or five members) and individual singer-songwriter performers with guitars (as opposed to MCs/rappers/singers and beatmakers in the hip hop music world—the focus of the following

chapter). The rock model is reinforced by the NKA-based funding programs and their dominant discourse, which tends to refer to "bands." Moreover, the work organization implied by the programs also corresponds to the traditional pop-rock model well-established during the twentieth century: the scheme funds the writing and production of records by specific artists (as opposed to collaborations), followed by subsequent tours and the music video(s) accompanying the hit song(s) from the record. Its career model is also based on, and in its turn reinforces, the star system, wherein there are clear hierarchies and steps for not only musicians, but also behind-the-scenes workers, whose positions are primarily determined by the position of the artist(s) with whom they work. For example, the "opening act" position is utilized in the program's "opening band" (*előzenekar*) grant, for which the potential "headlining bands" (*főzenekar*) can apply (Hangfoglalo.hu, n.d.).

With regard to income from music, live gigs constitute the primary source, whereas digital income at the time of the research was irrelevant for many musicians in this segment. Nevertheless, music was typically not the only paid work for musicians, managers or even technicians; and even where it was, the workers relied on "multi-branch careers" (Antal 2015, 94), with a varying number of jobs and tasks fulfilled (e.g., musician and sound technician; musician, manager and record label employee; musician and music teacher). Having more than one source of income or job to rely on was thematized in 31 out of the 35 semi-structured interviews, with 118 code occurrences, demonstrating that this is an overarching condition.

Table 2.1 summarizes the structural position of this outlined segment and its workers—the relation to the state and its social position—its internal structural hierarchy, and the primary characteristics of labor organization. "Music industry" in inverted commas refers to the specific public use of this term within both the profession and in the broader public, which nonetheless excludes many other segments and forms of labor organization in the economy of (popular) music. The characterization combines an understanding of the relations of dependency and (relative) autonomy from the market and the state with working conditions and the political economy of the (digitalized) production of popular music in post-2010 Hungary. The summary enables a comparison with other segments, notably the broadly defined hip hop world, analyzed in the following chapter.

Table 2.1. The pop-rock-dominated "music industry"

Pop-rock-dominated "music industry"
(Selective) state support
Professional bodies and representation of interests
Project-based labor organization (album, tour etc.)
Star system
Band/artist as unit
Live music: festivals, club venues
Multi-branch careers
Promoter as gatekeeper
Networking
Masculine practices
Digital entrepreneurship ("reluctant entrepreneurs")
Audience building as emotional labor

Professionals in this specific segment—but not necessarily the musicians—tend to look on themselves, and are also institutionally constituted as the (Hungarian) "music industry," typically represented at trade events and organizations such as Music Hungary. Even though on the level of articulated mission, Music Hungary—both the association and the annual conference organized for delegates of the "music industry" profession—represents various segments of the industry, as interviews and sociodrama groups also confirmed, in practice it mainly represents the interests of live music promoters. Promoters, as we have seen, had emerged as the key gatekeepers in popular music, exerting influence by possessing significant economic, social, and political capital. Through the National Cultural Fund, from 2014, the government has facilitated the establishing of a professional network that to a significant extent overlapped with the previously emerging industry network—aided by the fact that there was practically no ideologically based resistance from representatives of the profession to the establishing of the Cseh Tamás and Hangfoglaló Programs—and actively building on the infrastructure and personnel built around the rebranded MR2 after

2007. Besides continuity, however, there was also some restructuring significantly impacting the opportunities and livelihood of musicians and music industry workers: as public service radio, along with television, was rendered under direct ideological control serving the regime's hegemony building, it ceased to fulfil its previous cultural policy goals, namely actively promoting a stylistically relatively broad segment of alternative pop-rock music, including early-career artists on a national level. These goals were instead continued in a certain sense, although ostensibly in a less strategic manner and with less efficacy, by the NKA schemes.

Even though the state provided some resources to music industry workers through the NKA, establishing, for many, a strong dependency that also put them in precarious positions, in exchange, this enabled the government to exert increasing ideological control and incorporation essentially without resistance from cultural workers. Gatekeepers' political positions appeared as key in acquiring and distributing resources. The regime in power, moreover, used the COVID-19 crisis situation for further capital accumulation and for involving existentially vulnerable cultural workers in the production of government ideology, while simultaneously leaving the vast majority of musicians and music industry workers without material support. According to the logic of neoliberal capitalism, the regime left it to workers and their households to manage and absorb the demands and costs of the crisis.

The autonomy these Hungarian musicians and music industry workers are striving for is primarily individual and entrepreneurial. There is an overall belief in a free market, which is typically articulated in an East-West moral framing, and which, for musicians in particular, is accompanied by a techno-optimistic view of digital media, based primarily on the hope that it enables the circumvention of the gatekeepers of the live music industry as well as the state apparatus, and the favoritism and sexism associated with these gatekeepers. The construction of the desired autonomy is visibly shaped by the shifting political context: the definition of autonomy against the state and, in particular, against political actors, while also desiring the state to be more supportive of workers, increased with the COVID-19 crisis.

The Platformization of Musical Labor and its Social Embeddedness: The Case of Hip Hop

The Hip Hop Music World

Following the problematization of the Hungarian pop-rock "music industry" and its embeddedness into global and local social, economic, and political structures, this chapter continues with the exploration of labor in a segment that remains relatively distinct from the rock-based, institutionalized and dominant "music industry." This segment is the broadly understood hip hop music world, where work during the given time period was predominantly organized around song-centered collaborations and content creation for digital platforms, primarily YouTube, but also Facebook and Instagram, and to a lesser extent, music streaming platforms such as Spotify. The broad genre category used here includes songs in the more recent trap style, mainstream or "commercial" and underground hip hop, as well as R'n'B and pop songs whose creators are linked to the hip hop scene, and where the specificities of songwriting and producing are drawn from the genre conventions of hip hop (following a structure of vocals on backing "beats").[1] In other words, although I refer to genre (conventions), I understand hip hop here rather as a broader genre aesthetic in the same way as pop-rock (Regev 2013) as defined in the previous chapter: an aesthetic which can be understood as part of the general "hiphopification" (Gamble 2022) of contemporary pop music, thus a move away from the pop-rock aesthetic paradigm. As I will demonstrate, this segment is less visible from the perspective of both state institutions and professional organizations of the "industry;" moreover, it is partly symbolically excluded based on its "low" social-cultural status. At the same time, the labor process is more directly integrated into the relations of global digital platform capitalism.

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[1] In the international music industries, "urban music"—introduced as an alternative for Black music—serves as a collective category. Partly since it is a widely debated category, and partly because it is not in use in the Hungarian context, I do not use it here.

In addition to hip hop, the use of the term "music world" also requires explanation. "Music world" has been used in popular music scholarship (e.g., by Crossley 2015) in reference to, and analogously with, Howard Becker's (1982) "art world" concept, particularly to place emphasis on the idea of a "network of cooperation." Becker's definition of the art world is "the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produce(s) the kind of art works that art world is noted for" (Becker 1982, x). Nick Crossley (Crossley 2015; Emms and Crossley 2018), for instance, has employed social network analysis to explore the development of music worlds such as punk or underground metal. Although collaboration networks are also central, as I will show below, to the organization of hip hop and *hiphopified* pop in Hungary, I use the term here as a relatively neutral one,[2] rather than as a strong theoretical statement, since my definition and outlining of the specific "world" is through the labor process.

The second section of the chapter discusses the potential of focusing on the labor process in order to make sense of working in music in a platformized digital environment. The subsequent sections explore the music world of Hungarian hip hop and "hiphopified" pop, organized around content production for digital platforms, with regard to its central network-based collaborative logic; competition and platform governance linked to the global platform infrastructure and economy into which this music world is embedded; informality; the relationship of this music world to the state, primarily characterized by exclusion from cultural policy; and the hierarchical gender relations permeating and fundamentally shaping labor in this music world. The aim of the analysis is to enrich the understanding of local musical labor in a global and digital context, highlighting an emerging labor process that is partly distinct from, but partly also sharing characteristics with, the labor organization of the dominant pop-rock segment. The characteristics that are shared are in part linked to social and economic aspects of Hungary's semiperipheral position. At the same time, the chapter also highlights a cultural segment that is less visible, nevertheless constituting a significant segment of Hungarian popular music: many of the most popular, most listened to Hungarian artists belong to this music world, even though they are typically absent from scholarly accounts, music journalism, as well as "music industry" discourse and the representation of music industry workers' interests, mainly due to the genre's low social and cultural status.

The chapter is primarily based on five interviews with musicians—singers/rappers, songwriters, producers—active in this music world, two women and three men, as well as one focus group interview, which included a female hip hop

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2   As opposed to other notions such as Bourdieu's (1993) "(sub)field," genre (e.g., Negus 1998) or music scene (e.g., Straw 1991). The chapter will nevertheless show that the labor process is in a complex relationship with social structure and cultural logics.

musician. It relies on additional data from the focus group interviews for understanding the social and cultural position of the hip hop world within popular music more broadly. This is a relatively small number of artists in comparison to those integrated into the pop-rock-dominated "music industry" discussed in the previous chapter, who constituted a larger segment of those I interviewed and the participants in both sociodrama and focus groups. This discrepancy is partly due to methodological difficulties I encountered with recruiting people active in hip hop or trap. Many of the musicians, in particular those active in more commercial-oriented music styles, are socially distant from the Budapest-based, or urban, intellectual elite or middle class comprising much of the mainstream rock-oriented "music industry." Many hip hop, trap, or R'n'B musicians come from a lower-class and/or marginalized Roma background. Among the musicians I interviewed, two of the three in the more commercial, pop-oriented styles were second- or first-generation immigrants; the third musician came from a Roma family and had grown up in poverty. Two rappers-singers were from towns outside of Budapest, in one case, from a lower-middle-class family (the family background is unknown in the case of the focus group participant); the sixth rapper, active in the much more intellectual-leaning underground hip hop scene, was the only artist from Budapest, although also from a lower-middle-class family. These musicians have typically less access to the kind of publicity available to well-known middle-class, university-educated rock, pop or jazz musicians, many of whom are regularly interviewed for the music press, and in some cases, invited to participate in roundtable discussions at industry events, and who as a result tend to possess established and articulate narratives of their own careers as well as the music industry context in which they work. In contrast, artists on the more commercial end, if they receive any media coverage apart from online social media, tend to be featured in the tabloid press or on daytime commercial television. Due to the structure and profile of such channels and programs, they have less control over their own narrative. This, in addition to the greater social distance between them and myself as a researcher, may have been a contributing factor towards a greater reluctance to respond to research interview requests—something I did not experience among urban middle-class musicians in socially and culturally more "legitimate" music worlds.

To compensate for planned interviews which ultimately did not happen, the chapter also draws on ethnographic observation of the offline (a music video shooting) and online activity—on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube—of selected artists during and after the interviews, for a period of at least six months. These included each of the interviewed musicians, as well as several others—partly artists who were mentioned in the interviews and thus formed the interviewed musicians' broader network.

The Platformization of Popular Music and the Labor Process

The production, distribution, and consumption of music in the broadly defined hip hop world in Hungary today, as observed above, is centered around digital content-based platforms. Understanding labor within this music world is therefore also about describing how global digital platforms are shaping work in music. The theoretical grounding provided by labor process theory and the ways in which it has been employed in various contexts, from factories to the platform-based "gig economy," is helpful in this endeavor, since it centers questions of technology and division of labor, simultaneously highlighting processes of control, exploitation, and alienation on the one hand, and the conditions of worker autonomy, creativity, and resistance on the other. The labor process approach goes back to Marx's theory, outlined in *Capital, Volume I* ([1867] 1976) of the relationship between the creative power of human labor and the capitalist mode of production: in the capitalist mode of production, the elements of the labor process, that is, work or labor, the subject of work or labor (nature or raw materials), and the instruments of labor, "are combined to produce surplus value as well as use-values" (Friedman 1977, 14; Marx [1867] 1976). In an abstract sense, as Friedman explains, Marx's labor process is about "the relation between man and nature," but "in any concrete stage of history the labor process is also a social process in which *people interact*" (Friedman 1977, 13; italics in the original). The history of the capitalist labor process involves the development of "division of labor in manufacture" (Marx [1867] 1976) and "the use of machinery to replace labor power and to increase the productivity of the workers who remain" (Friedman 1977, 16; Marx [1867] 1976), thus, the relationship between technology and the control of labor.

After Marx, the labor process approach was aimed at describing the organizing of industrial labor in the context of the factory, as in the work of Braverman (1974) on Taylorism, Friedman (1977) on how control is maintained over labor in firms through managerial strategies in the form of "direct control" and "responsible autonomy," and Burawoy (1979) on what he calls the manufacturing of consent, that is, workers' willingness to labor as hard as they can to meet targets. More recently, the labor process perspective has been applied to labor outside of the traditional factory context: in the digitalized environment, the cultural and creative industries, as well as the intersection of the two. Gillian Ursell (2000) employs a labor process perspective to understand flexible work in the UK television industry, and Alessandro Gandini (2018) explores the digital platform-based gig economy through this lens, focusing on emotional labor and control, and ranking and rating systems that serve purposes of managerialization and monitoring of workers.

Recorded music, as Hesmondhalgh, Jones, and Rauh (2019, 1) argue, was "the first major cultural industry to be transformed by online platforms," but the organization of creative labor around, and by, digital platforms, has taken place in other cultural industries too (e.g., Nieborg and Poell 2018; Cunningham and Craig 2021). In the music industries, especially recorded music, content-based digital platforms, including audio- and/or video-based streaming services as well as social media, signify a process that has been termed reintermediation (e.g., Galuszka 2015): these platforms have increasingly come to occupy the intermediary positions between creators—musicians—and the audience. The idea of reintermediation responds to initial hopes of "disintermediation" expressed, as mentioned in the previous chapter, in more (techno-)optimistic accounts[3] of the internet and music production and consumption regarding the possibilities offered by digital and online technology to circumvent traditional gatekeepers, in particular record labels (who had long been exploiting musicians, see e.g., Stahl 2013) and mass media channels such as television, radio, and the music press. Digital platforms can be considered as arguably the most important—although not the only—new intermediaries between creators/producers and consumers of music in the digitalized music industries. The platformization of the cultural industries, and among them, the recording industry, has been dominated by IT corporations constituting an oligopoly, such as Google (YouTube), Apple (e.g., iTunes, Apple Music), Meta (Facebook) and Amazon (Poell et al. 2017), or the Chinese Tencent (Davis and Xiao 2021) or ByteDance (TikTok) (Kaye, Zeng, and Wikström 2022).

From the perspective of labor, digital platforms are described by Nick Srnicek as

> a new type of firm […] characterized by providing the infrastructure to intermediate between different user groups, by displaying monopoly tendencies driven by network effects, by employing cross-subsidization to draw in different user groups, and by having a designed core architecture that governs the interaction possibilities. (Srnicek 2017, 49)

Platforms can be conceived as a new way of regulating labor, but one that arguably fits into the post-Fordist process of reorganizing the labor process.[4] This also applies to labor performed in, or channeled into, the cultural and creative

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3   Techno-optimistic or technological triumphalistic (Taylor 2016, 120) accounts relating to new music technologies, in particular the rise of MP3 and peer-to-peer file-sharing can be considered as part of what Barbrook and Cameron (1996) famously called the "Californian Ideology" (for a recent revisit and actualization of the concept and the original book, see Hepp, Schmitz, and Schneider 2023).

4   Srnicek himself, however, distinguishes the organization of platforms from post-Fordist lean production. This distinction is based on the way capital, rather than labor, is organized: the logic of convergence and the fundamental reliance on data as opposed to more "traditional" routes of vertical and horizontal integration or conglomeration (Srnicek 2017, 104).

industries. Analyses aimed at the platformization of cultural labor have tended to focus on three main areas: first, the organizing power of algorithms and the lack of transparency in terms of remuneration and other aspects such as visibility (Hesmondhalgh et al. [2023] provide a comprehensive literature review); second, the power and influence of ranking and rating systems, and the ways in which they enhance competition among individual workers (Velthuis and van Doorn 2020; Prey 2020; Baym et al. 2021); and, third, interpretations framing platform labor in terms of governance (e.g., Caplan and Gillespie 2020) from the perspective of the platform, and entrepreneurialism (Duffy and Hund 2015; Duffy 2015; Haynes and Marshall 2018; Guan 2020; Guo 2022) from the perspective of the worker. Additionally, critical reflections on platform-based cultural entrepreneurship tend to highlight workers coming to embrace neoliberal, individualized strategies in their work and careers that rely heavily on online platforms operated by powerful capitalist corporations. These accounts point out that entrepreneurialism as a discourse (Guo 2022) and entrepreneurial subjectivities (Duffy 2015) tend to celebrate and embrace platforms as a technological toolkit—a means of production—and a set of opportunities without considering their exploitative, individualizing, and potentially alienating logic.

Siciliano (2021) theorizes creative labor from a labor process perspective based on two cases: firstly, workers in a recording studio, and secondly, YouTube content creators and intermediary workers at an agency (a media management company or "multichannel network" [Siciliano 2021, 132]) assisting and managing such creators' work. Siciliano thus focuses on the relatively invisible, behind-the-scenes work that makes use of digital technology (hardware and software) and online platforms, which is integrated into the creative/cultural industries. He reflects on the ostensible discrepancy between digital labor and the labor process approach:

> [...] capitalism progresses by removing creativity from work, by separating planning from execution or mind from body, as in Taylorist factories. Though still readily used by scholars studying "digital labor" [e.g., Aneesh (2009); Huws (2014)], Braverman's argument runs rough against capital's increased demand for "creativity" in paid employment. (Siciliano 2021, 6)

In light of this, his enquiry is aimed at the ways in which capital manages to assert control over creative labor,[5] more precisely, how digital platforms and their adjacent technologies create an experience that facilitates the engagement of creative workers—musicians and other content creators—and the behind-the-scenes workers aiding them. This experience—which itself may be a creative one—

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5   Creative labor is defined in Siciliano's book as "(un)paid work performed within the cultural industries" (Siciliano 2021, 6).

ensures that workers continue to produce creative "content" even in the absence of sufficient or reliable payment and a predictable career, in other words, among precarious working conditions. By focusing on the nuances of creative workers' engagement with technology—the instruments of labor—Siciliano demonstrates that "contemporary work technologies provide [them] with aesthetic experiences, enchanting work as workers 'disappear' into these objects in search of meaning" (11). "The objects or artifacts that enable and extend creative labor," he argues, "provide a bit of 'magic' or ineffable 'cool'—a distinctive 'structure of feeling' that binds workers to their work" (ibid.). These observations are parallel to accounts of the ways in which gamification, primarily through apps, shapes and controls work in the gig economy like that of the work of couriers or Uber drivers (e.g., Gandini 2018, 1050; Perrig 2021; Vasudevan and Chan 2022).

In his discussion of DIY music scenes and social media—primarily Facebook—in the UK, Ellis Jones also evokes Braverman (1974) to demonstrate "that reliance on automated tools provided by monopolistic platforms constitutes a relative 'deskilling' of DIY [music] culture" (Jones 2021, 20). Crucially, Jones names *optimization* as an operational logic of platforms (more precisely, platform *technology*) that drives DIY music practitioners, otherwise not inclined to compete with one another in accordance with the ethics of the scene, towards competition (128). The "scientific management" of Taylorism parallels, according to Jones, the "nudging" logic of platforms—keeping users online, motivating them to post, to react, and so forth—where it is "the monopolistic rulers of platform capitalism who are best placed to nudge" (131). Like Siciliano, Jones also emphasizes the "disavowal of agency and a voluntary submission to platform logics" through the use of social media (136). So even though Do-It-Yourself—similarly to other counter-cultural movements emerging in the wake of 1968—could, originally, be considered as critical to Fordist and Taylorist labor processes in cultural work, "DIY's historical rejection of managerialism is shown to be deeply, unfortunately, compatible with the political-economic logic of platforms" (122).

One aspect that is missing from the above accounts of creative and digital labor from a labor process perspective is the global organization of both the cultural industries and digital platforms, which entails that local labor is channeled from different positions into these global value chains and economies. Digital platforms, as already argued in the previous chapter, directly expose creative workers to the global organization of capital concentration. We have seen that platforms' monetization policies tend to favor content creators from the global core (this, however, does not mean that the working conditions of digital workers in the global core are optimal, as research such as mentioned above demonstrates). Furthermore, the ways in which income from digital music is allocated locally, depends on access to both—local or international—distributors, and

other national-level intermediaries, for instance, collecting societies. In Hungary, the processes of collecting data by the latter, as mentioned in my introductory chapter, essentially cannot remain up-to-date with digital streaming platforms: establishing the infrastructure for managing an unexpected and unprecedented amount of data has been a serious burden for both Artisjus and EJI, whose financial and human resources are immeasurably small compared to digital platform companies.[6] Specific deals between these intermediaries and platform corporations therefore crucially impact working conditions locally, as do collecting societies' own policies of dividing the collected royalty income, which is a question of cultural policy. In the chapter, I therefore also consider relevant local conditions, and ask how platforms—and their adjacent technologies—shape the labor process in a specific music popular segment on the semiperiphery.

The cited classics of the labor process (Braverman 1974; Friedman 1977; Burawoy 1979) are all based on the idea that a crucial question of the industrialization of labor in the history of capitalism is the channeling of workers into wage labor, namely proletarianization, mainly through coercion, disciplinary regimes, and the pressure of subsistence, and later, in particular the twentieth century, a consumption regime (Kuczi 2011; Thompson 1963). Historical accounts, however, also demonstrate that this process of proletarianization was never total—for instance, agricultural labor or servant labor, both organized according to different temporal regimes to, complemented factory work even at the peak of industrial capitalism. In addition, extra-work relations, such as relations within the household, also partly structured factory work: as Tilly and Scott observe regarding factories in England and France in the nineteenth century, children often worked in factories under the supervision of their fathers, who were also the ones to receive the child(ren)'s wages (Tilly and Scott 1987, 106–16). At the same time, the mothers took care of domestic labor, at times in addition to factory work and/or various other unskilled jobs (123–45). In the present case, if we take the platform as an analogy for the factory, I am also aiming to uncover the extra-platform social relations shaping contemporary digitalized, globalized musical labor. An instructive example of this shift in perspective is Lin Zhang's (2021) analysis of a "new hybrid regime of [...] 'platformized family production'" (342), which demonstrates "the embeddedness of e-commerce work in a network of historically formed gendered labor division in villages and in collective social production online" (343). In the Chinese village Zhang studied, digitalization opened up a new market for traditional handicraft production. This new economy continued to be based on family production, yet the new conditions, in particular the moving in of urban entrepreneurs and the

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6   Artisjus eventually solved this problem by partnering with French company, SACEM for the management of Hungarian songwriters' rights on streaming platforms from January 2023, but at the time of the research, the majority of streaming-based royalties remained unregistered and unpaid.

competition created, also changed social relations, deepening class and generational inequalities among women (353). Another angle from which to approach this is through the autonomist Marxist metaphor of the "social factory" (Tronti 1962; Negri 1989, 79)—which may be understood "as a set of relations subordinated to the capitalist production of value" (Csányi 2023, 5)—by looking at how digital platforms shape the entirety of social life in cultural work (c.f. Gill and Pratt 2008).[7]

Therefore, the analysis aims to uncover how individual musical entrepreneurship is complicated in this semiperipheral context, and how social relations such as gender and class intersect with the cultural logic of genre. The analysis will show that entrepreneurialism or the network-based logic of the hip hop music world are embedded in social relations—inequalities—that do not originate from the platforms themselves, but are nevertheless reinforced and enhanced by them. It will partly confirm the findings of studies arguing that digital platform technology, rather than replacing human labor, helps to channel, organize, and govern it. Still, it will also indicate that this governance of labor is not total, or without counterforces.

Platform Music: Labor in the Hiphop(ified) Music World

NETWORKS OF COLLABORATION

In the broadly defined hip hop music world in Hungary today, individual artists—singers, rappers, producer-songwriters, "beatmakers" (musicians responsible for composing the background or "beat" [Söderman and Folkestad 2010])—dominate over groups. Although these individual musicians occasionally work on their own, it is more typical to collaborate on songs or albums. A central type of collaboration in hip hop music is between a singer/rapper and a producer or "beatmaker," which is facilitated by the dominant genre conventions of hip hop: "Collaborations, especially in hip hop, where you normally require a foundation [beat] and an MC who writes the lyrics and records it, technically this is quite simple to realize. [...] And usually, collaborations are made like this" (interview with a 21-year-old male rapper, November 22, 2020). Some of these collaborations are regular—the well-known Hungarian rapper Krúbi, for in-

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[7]   Van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal (2018, 2) use the term "platform society" to highlight "the inextricable relation between online platforms and societal structures."

stance, regularly worked with producer Seaside on his recordings at the time of the research—but more often, they are occasional or one-offs, and musicians are constantly on the lookout for new collaborators. This starkly distinguishes hip hop from the mode of operation of a rock band. Music creation in the hip hop world is therefore organized around relationships, or rather, networks of collaboration (a term I use as simultaneously distinct from and parallel with Becker's [1982] "networks of cooperation"). Collaborations, in particular among singers/rappers on individual songs, are typically framed as one artist "featuring" another (or various others)—a practice generally called "*feat*ing" [*feat*elés] among Hungarian artists and audiences.

At least in the underground hip hop and trap scene, community-organized live events and collectives were crucial in fostering connections—friendships that would turn into relations of collaboration. As the rapper quoted above explained: "there are certain hip hop pubs, where people who do this kind of thing go. Or parties where people who make hip hop music meet" (interview with a 21-year-old male rapper, November 22, 2020). Connections, however, were also very often made online via social media: "I've always been bombed with feat[uring] requests" (interview with a female trap/pop singer and songwriter, October 22, 2020). In such cases, artists may not necessarily know each other personally beforehand; the request can be made merely based on admiration for the artist's music.

The unsigned urban music artists studied by George Musgrave in the UK between 2010 and 2013 "felt they must collaborate, where collaboration is conceptualized as a process of judicious positioning, whether consensual or otherwise, to capture the attention of a particular group of cultural intermediaries" (Musgrave 2017, 49). Musgrave named radio DJs, bloggers and journalists as cultural intermediaries, understood in the Bourdieusian sense as "all the occupations involving presentation and representation [...] and in all the institutions providing symbolic goods and services" (Bourdieu [1979] 1984, 359). Musgrave argued that these intermediaries were the ones capable of imbuing artists with cultural capital—distinguishability—among the conditions of a highly competitive digitalized market. "[T]he competitive dynamics of the marketplace" thus "bred a particular creative logic; attention seeking via collaboration" (Musgrave 2017, 49). In the Hungarian case, such gatekeepers were undoubtedly present, although in the form of powerful producers and independent record label owners (often occupying both positions) rather than journalists, bloggers, or DJs. Moreover, through collaborations, recording artists did not only seek the attention of "human" gatekeepers, but sought to optimize their online reach.

The listing of names along with song titles (indicated by figures 3.1 and 3.2) in this sense functions like "tagging" on social media: with multiple artist names, new online releases also multiply the audiences reached with the help of YouTube's algorithm. This effect is added to the online promotional work performed by

each artist, which becomes multiplied in the case of a "feat." Therefore, strategies of online visibility and reach—a mode of optimization of creative collaboration for the platforms (c.f. Jones 2021, 127–36)—are an additional aspect of the "social and relational capital and cultural capital" involved in collaboration observed by Musgrave (2017, 59). Collaborations are shaped by the affordances[8] of digital social media and content-based platforms, particularly YouTube.

Figure 3.1. Screenshot from YouTube: Tirpa's song/video "Wolt" (2021) featuring Krúbi, Giaj, and Aza

Figure 3.2. Screenshot from YouTube: Burai's song "Veszélyes" (2023) featuring GwM, Missh, and Heni Dér

Songs, moreover, become centered in a way that the success of performers and writers are directly dependent on the success of a particular hit (which is often a collaboration). A producer, songwriter and singer alluded to this in his case in the following context:

> Previously, I was producing, writing songs for others, then that didn't work anymore, because the music market took a direction where songs are not really played on TV or the radio, or less than before; it is no longer possible to rely on author royalties. So it is gigs, really, that bring income, *and that only works if the song is good.* (interview with a 37-year-old male singer and producer, September 3, 2020; my emphasis)

This tendency is in line with the observation made in a report by MIDiA Research in relation to music streaming in the global core, namely that "streaming has created a song economy, making the song more important than ever" (Mulligan, Jopling, and Ulvaeus 2021, 7). Based on quantitative data from the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, France, and Germany (n=6000),[9] the authors argue that individual songs increasingly matter more to streaming consumers than the artist (with 60% of respondents stating this, and 29% stating that the artist matters more to them).

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8   In their overview of "technology affordances and constraints theory," Majchrzak and Markus (2013, 832) define affordance as "an action potential, that is, to what an individual or organization with a particular purpose can do with a technology or information system."

9   The report provides no information regarding the representativeness of the data.

CONNECTION, COMPETITION, AND PLATFORM GOVERNANCE

As the interviews and my online observation show, the primary medium for releasing songs was YouTube for hip hop, trap, and R'n'B musicians. Quantitative surveys of music consumption in Hungary confirm this: music streaming data indicates that Spotify and other subscription-based, paid services and YouTube, which was dominantly used free,[10] remained partly distinct worlds, indicative of a different user base, even if overlaps exist. As the report compiled by Tófalvy and others demonstrates, Spotify use reflects "more international, cosmopolitan trends of consumption;" at the same time, music consumed on YouTube tends to be "local, more broadly accessible, but of lower social status" (Tófalvy et al. 2023, 10). YouTube remained the dominant of the two—the platform had competed with radio as the most popular medium for listening to music during the latter half of the 2010s. In addition, even though various population segments with various tastes in music use YouTube as a medium of listening, and my interviews also indicated that YouTube was an important distribution platform for artists of various genres, including rock, jazz, as well as electronic music, the available quantitative data also strongly indicates that hip hop, trap, R'n'B, and "hiphopified" pop songs and artists were consistently and strongly dominating the YouTube music playlists at the time of the research. For instance, the cited NMHH (National Media and Infocommunications Authority) report published a list of the songs that were in a leading position on YouTube (music content) among Hungarian listeners during the weeks between February 7, 2019, to March 8, 2023 (Tófalvy et al. 2023, 69–71). Out of the 69 leading songs, 7 were international hits; out of the 62 Hungarian songs, 57 could be considered as part of the broadly defined hip hop world; the rest were other pop songs based on their sound aesthetic, even though two out of the remaining five were linked to hip hop via collaborations. The rest of the analyzed statistics—the artists most streamed on YouTube during the mentioned period and per year, or the top 20 most streamed songs—confirm this strong connection between genre aesthetics and platform.

The primary measure of success in the hip hop music world is the number of views and *like*s. Songs' online releases are typically accompanied by intensive promotional content production to raise and maintain attention on social media platforms, especially Instagram and, to a lesser extent, Facebook. This

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[10]   Although Spotify also offers a free service (with advertisements), and YouTube a paid music streaming service (YouTube Music), the former was predominantly used in subscription form, while in the case of the latter, the free service was preferred. Other music streaming platforms available and used in Hungary were Apple, Deezer, Tidal, Bandcamp, and Soundcloud (and people also listened to music via Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok) (Tófalvy et al. 2023, 26).

includes posting video "teasers," but regular posts documenting "milestones" reached by a particular release—such as reaching or even leading the YouTube "trending list"—on Facebook or Instagram also form part of the promotion process, as do so-called "*lives*," that is, live video streams typically documenting the work process or the musicians' everyday life. Active communication with the audience—fans and "followers" on social media—"the relational labor of connection" (Baym 2015) is an essential part of this process. The interviewed artists were in general positive about this part of their work:

> I have a great amount of love in me towards people, and I'm really interested in what they think and their opinions, and it's great to read messages [...] I always think back to how happy I was when I received a response from, let's say, somebody like [well-known rappers] Eckü or Fluor when I sent them my terrible recordings, and they wrote back to me saying, keep at it. [...]
>
> *- So you tend to enjoy this part [of your work] then.*
>
> Yes, of course, of course. I really, really enjoy it.
> (interview with a 21-year-old male rapper, November 22, 2020)

At the same time, they were also well aware that this work was essential and therefore not a choice:

> I think, especially in [...] the twenty-first century, this is one of the best ways to create an audience for yourself. See, you respond to a hundred people during one day, [...] in ten days, that's a thousand people. You have a resource of one thousand [people]. That's a lot! And that means you have already communicated with people! [...] And out of them, 250 may buy the merch, they might buy a ticket to your gig—but by the way, this is not why I'm doing it, it's only in retrospect that I realized, and I was told that it worked like this. (ibid.)

As shown above, collaborations are a key element in the hip hop genre and securing a "feat" is viewed as an effective means of getting ahead in one's career. Therefore, the network of collaborations is embedded in a complex field of prestige hierarchies, wherein producers and small record label owners occupy intermediary and gatekeeping positions. In addition, however, collaborations are also intertwined with friendships, creating a relational, emotional, and moral economy (Banks 2006; Umney 2017) of "*feat*ing." As I explore in more detail in chapter 5, professional and intimate relationships are deeply intertwined in musical labor. In the digitalized, platformized hip hop world, one result is the impact of aspects of the platform architecture (Nieborg and Poell 2018) on personal relationships. The attitude of one of the interviewed artists towards

competition suggested that friendly relationships and the camaraderie of the—underground—hip hop community were complicated by the competitive logic of platforms, underscored by the quantifiability of popularity in terms of numbers and ranking:

> I also don't like competition and this continuous sizing up—you are constantly sizing yourself up against others. Here, your friends are also your competitors. We still compete for numbers and whose gigs are attended better. And who is listened to by more people.
>
> *- So this is something you keep count of amongst yourselves.*
>
> Of course, of course. [...] This scene is like, everyone knows everyone, and there is a basic respect, but still, when I look at a different artist's video, I feel, yeah, more people are watching me. Or fuck, why do more people watch this artist?
> (interview with a 21-year-old male rapper, November 22, 2020)

The excerpt also confirms that in this music world, rankings, numbers of views or listens and *like*s on content shared via online platforms are the dominant criteria of success and value—self-valuation as well as the valuation of others. Describing this phenomenon, Robert Prey observes a "new intimacy to our relationship with numbers and metrics" emerging with platformization (Prey 2020, 255). For musicians, he argues, these numbers "are increasingly important determinants of self-knowledge, self-worth, and career viability" (243). Social media thus serve as a vehicle for musicians to judge their success compared to others (Gross, Musgrave, and Janciute 2018, 17; Prey 2020, 249). Based on interviews with musicians, Prey argues that "[i]t is through performance metrics that a musician comes to know herself as a performer—and to see herself as a competitor within a field of competition" (Prey 2020, 246). The quoted rapper, however, clearly articulates an awareness and critique of this competition while acknowledging it as a key motivation.

Besides constituting significant emotional labor (Hochschild 1983), social media also significantly shapes time use by demanding attention in practically every waking hour of the day.

> *How much of your time is taken up by social media? Including generating ideas, thinking about content.*
>
> Well, about 80 percent of the time I'm awake, which is a lot anyway. [Thinking about] what I should be posting. The phone is constantly in my hand. What I should be doing, how I should be doing it, how did they do it, why I should be doing it that way, why not, should I be posting this, should they not see it, what do I want to say and so on. A great amount of time. That's where I live my life. (interview with a female trap/pop singer and songwriter, October 22, 2020)

Again, this demand also stems from (social) media platforms' operating logic, which links visibility and beneficial algorithmic placement to, amongst other things, the frequency of sharing new content and the frequency of interaction. Visibility, in its turn, is "[a] key factor determining a creators' revenue—or lack thereof," and it is "supported or thwarted by algorithmic systems (Bishop 2019; O'Meara 2019; Petre et al. 2019)" (Duffy and Meisner 2023, 289). Due to the lack of transparency of the algorithm's operation, content creators are relying on "algorithmic gossip" (Bishop 2019) and their own work of figuring out, trial-and-error—in other words, strategies of optimization (Jones 2021). The quoted musician observed: "I can see, on Facebook, how the algorithm speeds up, I'm getting a better reach because I'm more active" (interview with a female trap/pop singer and songwriter, October 22, 2020).

THE INFORMALITY OF PRODUCTION: MUSIC VIDEOS

Since the primary means of distribution for musicians in this genre is YouTube, a video-based platform, new songs are usually released along with a music video. This is different from "traditional" practice in the pop-rock world, where an album would be accompanied by usually not more than two or three videos, usually made for the single releases. Although the costs typically involved in producing a video sometimes prevent one from being made, due to the connection to You-Tube, there is a strong likelihood that songs with videos will be played more than those without. As one of the musicians explained:

> *In this genre, it does not really make sense to even release a song without a music video, does it?*
>
> Unfortunately, unfortunately.
> [...]
> There was a song on this [recent] album [...], which was released without a video. [...] I'm sure this song would have produced a great reach if it had been released with a video. But since there wasn't one, it failed to reach even a million. (interview with a female trap/pop singer and songwriter, October 22, 2020)

Therefore, to maintain attention and popularity, there is a drive to continuously produce and release songs and videos—"content" for the platforms—as frequently as possible, which artists attempt to do by keeping the budget as low as possible and finding sponsors. The means of sponsorship may be formal, as in the case of corporate sponsors, or informal, for example, material support provided by the musician's family:

> I'm trying to get an album out, but now with my management, we have been looking for sponsors, who, for instance, in exchange for one of their products featured in a clip, support [the making of the album]. Because you have to know that each of my

solo songs, even those that were not released [on my own] channel, but were solo [recordings], at the beginning were financed by my parents, and then I financed them myself. For this reason, I'm unable to proceed at a pace [I would prefer to], since I have other expenses of course, and shooting such a video usually costs 150 thousand [forints]—well, for me. Sometimes more, 200 thousand.[11] (interview with a female trap/pop singer and songwriter, October 22, 2020)

The production of both music and videos—at least the editing phase—makes use of domestic spaces, during which household resources, material as well as human, are utilized. These conditions of production result in characteristic aesthetic features: hip hop, trap, and R'n'B videos typically alternate between two, sometimes three locations; they often feature the street, a car, as well as internal spaces, which may be more abstract, shot in a studio—typically in the case of the more lyrical or personal-focused themes—or a club or bar venue in the case of songs with more of a "party" vibe.

The making of a video for an R'n'B track I observed illustrates a typical setup, characterized by a relatively small crew and efficient use of available resources: a loose division of labor combined with improvisation and flexibility in terms of both scenes and ideas, which are being shared freely across the team. At the end of the summer of 2020, before the "second wave" of COVID-19, when restrictions only affected large events, I attended a video shooting, which took place at a location outside of Budapest, but within easy reach. The location was near natural water, with some holiday and sports facilities, enabling various settings and backgrounds that could, with a little creativity, easily be made to look like a seaside resort (a "California" vibe). It was revealed to me that this was a fairly common location for shooting music videos. The crew—consisting of seven people (director, his assistant, cameraman, operators, stylist)—the female vocalist, and two more musicians who had collaborated on the track, which had just been finalized the previous night (running into early morning, as the main singer later told me), arrived at 5 p.m. for the official start; the shooting was scheduled until midnight. The first hour was spent with preparation, creating the hairstyle and makeup for the female vocalist, and the crew taking photos for various scenes and evaluating these. The second hour was spent shooting short scenes with the female vocalist. The male vocalist—co-producer and "star" of the production—did not arrive until around 7 p.m., when he walked on to the set accompanied by his partner and their young child in a pram.

A sense of informality, friendliness, and care permeated the event. As soon as he arrived, the male singer purchased his partner, me, and himself soft drinks. It was late summer and unexpectedly chilly towards the evening, so after a while, everyone was attempting to put cardigans and coats on everyone else (I was also

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[11]   The quoted sums are 385 and 510 euros.

helped out by the stylist, who lent me a jumper). At one point, after I had completed the first half of an interview with the male singer, the director called me to show me the scene they had just recorded on the camera—a gesture that was less about needing my opinion and more about making sure I felt included. There was plenty of improvisation, partly in response to the changing lights and scenery, accompanied by a constant checking of the recordings, giving feedback, and everyone sharing ideas. At one point, I was asked to hold the small JBL speaker, which functioned as the source of the music, close to the singers, while they were shooting what became the key scene of the video. There was an increasing amount of alcohol consumed by some of the participants—facilitated by the male singer—as the evening progressed. The friendliness and informality were only partly due to the regularity of collaboration among the people that were present; neither the female vocalist nor the two musicians had known anyone apart from each other ("We had just met for the first time, but everyone was really nice," as the vocalist reflected later [interview with a 21-year-old female singer, September 14, 2020]). The female singer also confirmed that other video shootings in which she participated tended to be similarly friendly. The professional work was also dispersed with plenty of intimate moments, especially during the first half, when the mother and the baby were present: the baby had just received vaccines, and the two musicians helped the mother measure its temperature.

The video premiered on YouTube 16 days later and was an instant success, achieving exceptional numbers in terms of views and *like*s and essentially making a name for the female vocalist. The example thus demonstrates the efficient use of resources, with an element of informality in the divisions of labor: even though there were clear formal roles such as director, stylist, or musician, everyone participated in the creative process. Moreover, the boundaries between private and professional spaces and relations were blurred through the presence of family members, through emotional labor—care generously shared among the workers—and in part by substance (alcohol) use.

RELATIONS OF DEPENDENCE: THE STATE AND THE MARKET

Musicians belonging to the broadly defined hip hop music world were typically underrepresented, or not present at all at the ticket-based music festivals (such as Sziget or Volt—as opposed to free events such as village days) that are so important for pop-rock artists. One likely reason for this is their embeddedness into different formal and informal professional networks, located out of the scope of economic and cultural interest of the mentioned promoter-gatekeepers. Behind the practices of gatekeeping, however, which directly involve aesthetic value judgments, implicit mechanisms of class-based and racist exclusion are likely to

operate with regard to the aforementioned higher representation of Roma ethnicity and lower-class musicians in the hip hop pop world. These mechanisms of exclusion are expressed with the mediation of taste and aesthetics, constituting what Bourdieu theorized as symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron [1970] 1991; Bourdieu [1998] 2002). It is, unfortunately, difficult to find quantitative evidence for this as there is little data on musical taste and social stratification from the past two decades in Hungary, with the exception of the study of Kristóf and Kmetty (2019).[12] The authors of this study, however, did not include rap or hip hop in the music samples they used to measure taste (their categories were "classical," "electronic," "rock," "*mulatós*," and "pop" music), despite the mentioned popularity of the genre. Yet, the low status of hiphop(ified pop) in the cultural hierarchy was evidently expressed, although in subtle, unconscious ways—as "gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims" (Bourdieu [1998] 2002, 1)—by industry professionals in the present study, through value judgments coupled with the questioning of the respective artists' proficiency and place in the "music industry." The following quote from a focus group comprising Budapest-based male and female promoters and/or managers—essentially the elite of the profession—illustrates this, including the subtlety of the symbolic violence:

> Here are AK26, who are also part of the music industry, and DJs, who are also part of the music industry. […] AK26, for instance, I think they just turn up with a pen drive and they need two microphones. Their costs are completely different, because they do four gigs, they have to pay one driver for the night, they turn up with a pen drive and that's it. (focus group 1, August 10, 2020)

The speaker refers to the hugely popular commercial hip hop duo AK26, and even though they acknowledge the act's membership in the music industry with a seeming discursive gesture of legitimation (although the necessity to explicitly state that they "are also part of the music industry" is telling), the reference to doing four gigs a night—as we will see, not an exaggeration but the reality of these performers' taxing workload—and needing no technological infrastructure beyond "a pen drive" and "two microphones" was cited in a context of speaking about quality in the profession and, in a more self-reflexive way, the "snobbery" of managers and promoters like themselves. Acts like AK26 were cited as "different" cases. The utterance was followed by the statement that what holds "the profession"—their own circle of managers and live music promoters—together is an adherence to "quality" as "a shared value system."

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12   At the same time, in the realm of qualitative research, Havas (2020) offers a nuanced Bourdieusian analysis of symbolic distinctions in the Hungarian jazz field according to race, ethnicity, and class.

Despite the genre's exclusion from music festivals, as the excerpt above also indicates, live shows are nevertheless significant for the artists, partly to promote the songs released via YouTube. Yet, they also constitute a crucial source of income—for some, the only source of income regardless of streaming popularity (as we will see in the next section, internal power relations, formalized in contracts, importantly structure who has access to royalty income and who does not). For hip hop musicians, live gigs are often organized in small club venues or discotheques across the country. It is typical for an artist to perform at two or even three events during one night, usually at late hours, resulting in a particularly arduous work regime and impacting the musicians' lifestyle.[13] As an artist explains:

> It is usually at late hours that we get to these gigs, because that's where we are in the line-up. So usually it is 11 or midnight at the earliest. [...] Usually, it takes 2 or 3 hours to get there. We arrive, do the gig, that's usually around 40 minutes. We then stay a little at the venue [...] and then move on to the next location. Normally, we would go to two venues [during one night] or sometimes more. [...] Usually we have to travel a lot. (interview with a 21-year-old female singer, September 14, 2020)

In addition to small club gigs, they also perform at free events organized by local councils, such as village or town days, as well as gastronomic-themed festivals, but performing at music festivals with entrance fees is much rarer and atypical. The latter is reserved for the small number of hip hop acts that cross the symbolic boundary of legitimacy, for instance, by getting airplay on MR2, and subsequently getting invitations to play at music festivals (often, these were acts gaining their popularity prior to 2016 or even 2012). In a focus group with female front singers, a female singer and rapper who is a member of such an act clearly distinguishes the kinds of gigs her band plays from the gigging practices of what she disdainfully, with negative value judgment, refers to as "YouTube trending" artists:

> *Do you play outside Budapest?*
>
> Artist 1: Yes, I do, but only in bigger towns [...], typically county towns. And I think you can really draw a line in Hungary, those artists [that are] YouTube trending ... you look at, let's say, the first ten, Missh,[14] it's trap shit, the whole lot ... practically, if

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[13] These working conditions echo the observations of Hesmondhalgh and Baker regarding those working in the British film industry—workers speaking about the physical dangers of working long hours, in particular having to drive in the night (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011, 118).

[14] Missh or Mr Missh (Mihály Demeter) was one of the most popular, but also controversial rappers/trap singers at the time of the research, indeed frequently having songs in the first ten of the Hungarian YouTube trending music list (controversial due to frequent publicized stories about him that included violent behavior and substance abuse).

there's no COVID, you look at their gig calendar, they play three venues in one day, because they begin at 10 or midnight in one place and at 3 am they go [to perform] to the disco three villages down.

Artist 2: Yes, it's a *hakni* parade.
(focus group 7, November 25, 2020)

The second singer, who fronted a rock band, uses the Hungarian term *hakni*, a specific term for a gig that implied a paid job done for the money as opposed to self-expression, self-fulfillment or other autonomous goals.[15]

During COVID-19, hip hop artists' exclusion from music festivals had further material consequences. As already shown in the previous chapter, support granted to musicians during the crisis was limited and far from unconditional: in the case of the Warehouse Gigs program, it was explicitly attached to the position occupied on the festival circuit. Musicians in the hip hop segment thus typically remained without access to COVID-19 grants. Despite no state relief, the segment was arguably more "resilient"[16] due to their reliance on digital media and the small-scale characteristic of music video production, which—as the early-September-2020 shooting described above shows—became possible after the first, strictest lockdown period. Moreover, the small-venue gigs (as opposed to bigger festivals, affecting the pop-rock world) could also continue from June 2020 up until November that year,[17] when yet another lockdown period was introduced (in effect until April 2021). The musicians I interviewed continued to work on songs and collaborations practically without a stop.

Lacking state support, the hip hop world instead relies on the involvement of corporate sponsors, Hungarian as well as foreign companies. Such sponsorship typically takes the form of relatively smaller fees granted for product placements or direct advertising by the artists on social media (typically fashion brands or services such as restaurants, hotels or spas), as opposed to long-term

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[15] "*Arccal a gázsi felé*," or "facing the fee," was another term that kept recurring to describe similar gigs or situations—concentrating on the money to be made was also referred to as a strategy to cope with bad working conditions or conflicts.

[16] As already observed in my introductory chapter, resilience is a deeply problematic term, embedded, as "resilience discourse," in neoliberal policy, including cultural. Critically reflecting on this discourse, Robin James understands it as "a theoretically and historically specific way to refer to a distinctively neoliberal ethical and aesthetic ideal" (James 2015, 6). "Instead of expending resources to *avoid* damage," explains James, "resilience discourse *recycles damage into more resources*" (7) (see also Dinardi 2019). I use the term here in inverted commas exactly for the way it incorporates the ambiguity of hip hop artists surviving despite the inadequacy of resources, and producing new, emergent ways of working around scarce resources, among working conditions that are far from ideal.

[17] However, between September and November, pubs and clubs were ordered to close at 11 pm. This measure disproportionately affected hip hop gigs due to their typical timing at late hours, even though many venues and promoters attempted to circumvent the restrictions by organizing gigs earlier.

contracts with one particular brand. As one musician explained, finding potential sponsors was one important role fulfilled by her manager (interview with a female trap/pop singer and songwriter, October 22, 2020).

The role of sponsors in popular music remains an under-researched area, with the notable exception of Hesmondhalgh and Meier (2014), who problematize the rise of sponsorship interest in "independent" music (in addition to artists released by major labels).[18] However, there are many recent accounts of so-called social media influencers and their labor, including from critical perspectives, reflecting on gender relations, (self-)exploitation and platform governance (Duffy 2017; Bishop 2019; O'Meara 2019; Shtern and Hill 2021). Musicians are, in a way, also treated as influencers by sponsor companies; as Shtern and Hill observe, "[c]ontent creators who incorporate branded content are known, particularly from the perspective of the advertising industry, as influencers" (Shtern and Hill 2021, 254). At the same time, the interviews suggested that for musicians, rather than articulating some kind of a genuine attachment to particular brands, products or companies, sponsorship provides basic and relatively predictable material resources that, especially combined with the aforementioned effective use of informal resources and labor, enable them to create musical and audiovisual works: "content" for the platforms. Moreover, these material resources help them to do this at a pace that is required by platforms if the musicians want to maintain visibility. Hesmondhalgh and Meier found that for independent musicians, the primary motivation for entering into a collaboration with a sponsoring company or brand is that, as opposed to a record deal, here the musicians are able to retain ownership of their recordings; and secondarily, "the longstanding desire to limit label interference in the creative process" (10). In other words, sponsorship was viewed as an alternative to a record label contract. In the present case, sponsorship is not necessarily an alternative, but rather a complementing form of income or other material support—artists looking for sponsors may or may not be signed to labels. As already indicated, one of the main expenses artists face is the financing of music videos—sponsors may assist with this. Apparel companies are also able to provide artists with clothes to wear in the videos:

> I also have sponsorship. For example, it's the second time I'm doing [a collaboration] with [German online fashion retailer] AboutYou, which means I get clothes, and they also pay me. So my income is mostly from such sponsorship. (ibid.)

Thus, although musicians in Hungary may not be as "reluctant entrepreneurs" (Haynes and Marshall 2018) as their UK counterparts, they may be thought of as *reluctant influencers*. This is also underscored by the fact that the overwhelming

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18   Other accounts focus on festival sponsorship (e.g., Anderton 2015).

majority of audience or fan comments on sponsored posts regard the artist, their new recording or, especially in the case of female musicians, their appearance in the form of comments about how "hot" or sexy they look in the given outfit (who often assert significant amount of emotional labor by responding to such comments, thanking the compliment, either in words or the use of emoji). In fact, it is difficult to find any engagement with the placed product or brand. This also distinguishes these musicians from professional "influencers," who directly post about products or create reviews with the aim of eliciting responses relating to the product from their followers.

As a result of cooperation with sponsoring companies—in many cases, fashion brands—a significant number of posts published by artists on social media, particularly Instagram, are photos and videos of them in everyday spaces, such as their own homes, recording studios or locations of music video shoots, the streets of Budapest, restaurants, as well as hotels or holiday resorts, with product placement. Domestic spaces often feature partners, children, friends, and even pets. This way, spaces of creation as well as spaces of the home—which may be one and the same—become permeated by (non-musical) commercial activity. This results in, firstly, an inextricable blending of the personal or intimate spheres and the sphere of work; and secondly, a visible commodification of domestic spaces and intimate relationships. In addition, the (self-)sexualization, even (self-)pornification is a frequent expectation from female artists, in particular singers and DJs, in mainstream pop music in general, as well as some niche genres—for example, Gavanas and Reitsamer describe how "sexualized self-marketing strategies" are a norm for female electronic music DJs as these "may increase the chances for gigs and media attention (Gavanas and Reitsamer 2016, 6–7). Hip hop has been notorious for its explicit objectification of women and misogyny,[19] and the music videos trending on Hungarian YouTube, when featuring women, almost invariably featured them in sexualized, often hypersexualized ways.[20] This effect is further enhanced in product placement posts by female musicians advertising fashion brands in particular by emphasizing appearance and style. Essentially, female musicians utilize the aesthetics of advertising or fashion photography, including their "porno chic" (McNair 2002; Gill 2007, 143), even if the photos are selfies. In this sense, their work is very similar to female influencers in general, who perform "sexualized labor" to generate monetizable attention, "which for women is structured by cultural expectations of 'porn chic' sexiness" (Drenten, Gurrieri, and Tyler 2020, 42). This sexual commodification

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[19]   See Rose (2008, 113–31; 149–65) for an analysis of debates around sexism in hip hop; Weitzer and Kubrin (2009) offer a content analysis of lyrics of all rap albums reaching platinum status in the USA between 1992–2000.

[20]   Without providing a detailed analysis here, the same applies to lyrics, which often involve direct misogyny alongside the objectification of women.

of themselves in their own supposedly private spaces, opened up to the public world of social media, means an extra vulnerability for female artists, which, as I demonstrate in the following section, is also accompanied by economic disadvantages stemming from the internal organization of the music world. Gender is a central structuring force in the work of musicians in the hip hop world.[21]

GENDER RELATIONS AND INCOME

Songs are either self-released or released via one of the several independent record labels associated with this music world. In hip hop, many of the labels are owned and directed by influential male artist-producers, who remain active as artists while running their record labels as businesses: for instance, Burai on the Beat (BOTB), run by the singer, songwriter, and producer Krisztián Burai, or Real Trill Music (RTM) and Money Maker Records (MMR), run by the rapper and songwriter Mr. Busta (Zsolt Kordik). In a collection of published interviews, Kordik himself emphasized the inseparability of him as an artist from the record label: "There is no Mr. Busta without Real Trill Music, and no Real Trill Music without Mr. Busta. Real Trill is my label, Real Trill and Mr. Busta are one and the same thing" (Horváth 2015, 13). Other labels, such as Scarcity Budapest (SCBP), founded by AZA (András Jakab), are organized more as a collective—yet still run by men. These labels play a significant role in structuring the collaborations of their associated artists, therefore they—their owners—occupy influential positions. In the present case, it is the previously mentioned producer-artists in influential gatekeeping positions that fulfill the role of intermediaries as opposed to the "radio DJs, bloggers and journalists" that Musgrave (2017) identified as cultural intermediaries in his study on hip hop.

Working conditions and the distribution of income were significantly shaped by gender relations. This genre world is characterized by a strict, although informal, division of roles: women were predominantly present as vocalists, either main or support/background vocalists, or so-called "refrain singers" accompanying male singers or rappers. "I call myself the refrain girl. [...] A lot of the time they say vocals, but I'm not a [background] vocalist, I perform main vocals, and I think it is important to distinguish between the two, because they are completely different positions"—explained a female singer who performed as a member of a rap group (focus group, November 25, 2020). Credited songwriters, producers and record label owners are almost entirely men (during the entire research, I did not encounter or hear about a female record label owner[22]).

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21   Gender relations remained untheorized in the formative labor process accounts (Davies 1990).
22   This is in marked contrast with the observation of Gross (2022, 164), who counts independent record label ownership among positions that are open to women in the context of the UK.

The strict division of labor was also manifest in the division of income, especially royalties, and symbolic capital in the form of crediting: my interviews with female artists confirmed that in collaborations, female vocalists are typically not credited on songs as authors, despite the fact that they often write their own parts (e.g., verse or chorus), and despite the fact that the parts sung by them, in particular, if it is the chorus, may be key to selling the song. Not being credited, however, means that they are not entitled to advertising or royalty payments, for instance, after YouTube plays. Male artist-producers also control their digital income through their YouTube channels: collaborations with various artists are released via their own channels—often named after the label—generating income for them, which is up to them to decide whether or not to redistribute.

The experience of an interviewed female artist exemplifies such a scenario. She explained the conditions of her record label contract thus—which was the first time she had been signed, so she stresses her lack of experience when agreeing to the terms:

> So the contract was like, it had no starting date for instance, it was written in a really one-sided way—he [the owner-producer] had all the rights and I had all the obligations, but I didn't really know how it is [usually] done.
>
> *- So you didn't get any royalty income?*
>
> No. Nothing. I sometimes did a live gig and I received a maximum of 40 000 [forints], but this was only one or two occasions. I remember how the video for [one of her major hits] cost 150 000 [forints] and it was released via their channel, so all income is theirs. So, looking back, I don't even understand how I could be so stupid.[23] (interview with a female trap/pop singer and songwriter, October 22, 2020)

She also explains that she is struggling financially now partly because she is not making money on her previous collaborations:

> [Income] from YouTube is mostly a supplement, since, of course if all those *feat*s [collaborations] had been released via my own channel, this wouldn't even be an issue. But this way, I'd rather say it's a supplement, there's no way I'd be able to pay the rent based on this. (ibid.)

As the first excerpt indicates, signed female artists typically only received income for live performances. The quoted 40 000 forints was double the amount another female singer received per gig, despite the fact that at the time when we spoke, this latter artist had already secured a major hit with the producer-record label owner she had collaborated with—a song that received 12 million views in 7 months (23 million at the time of writing), led YouTube trending for a week,

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23   The quoted figures approximately equal 100 euros and 385 euros.

and was even played on the public service popular music radio station MR2 Petőfi, which is very rare for this genre.

Although taking place in a different legal context, this gendered division of labor and income can be better understood in light of Matt Stahl's historical analysis of "the [contractual] commodification of singers' labor power as central to a gendered project of class domination" (Stahl 2021, 193); an analysis which is based on the comparison of a nineteenth-century and a contemporary case. Stahl demonstrates how, in the nineteenth century, opera singer Johanna Wagner was not an independent contractor in control of her labor power, which was in effect purchased by opera producer Benjamin Lumley. The contract in the Wagner case, as Stahl argues, made "a person's labor power into a property over which an employer can exercise exclusive rights" (199), rendering the female singer into an asset over which male producers—as legal subjects—could compete (202). In the same way as Wagner was prohibited from entering into a different contract with another (male) producer, contemporary singer-songwriter Kesha Sebert's labor power was litigated by her producer Dr. Luke and DAS Communications. Stahl employs Swan's (2012) concept of the "gendered erotic triangle" to highlight the specific gendered notions of ownership at play: male professionals fighting each other over the ownership of a woman's labor power.

Stahl's analysis cannot be mapped straight onto the male producer–female singer relationship in the Hungarian hip hop world. However, the experience of women clearly shows that in this case too, they occupy subordinate positions in relation to the male producers, who treat the women's labor power as their property. As we have seen, the terms of the record contract are restrictive for artists, and the experience of another female musician also shows that it can be binding. One musician decided not to enter into a contract with a record label for the following reasons:

> I got an offer from [a label] […] but I did not sign a contract with them, because the conditions weren't that favorable. […] As standard procedure, I would have had to sign the contract for a minimum period of three years, which I think is quite a long time. So, if there had been something I wasn't happy with, I wouldn't have been able to get out of the contract. And for gigs, we [as artists] would have received something like 6 percent of what we earned. We would have received nothing from YouTube money, so it would have been a lot of work for almost nothing. […] And we would have signed the contract as a group, three girls, which means that even that small percentage we'd have received would have been divided into three. (interview with a 21-year-old female trap/pop singer, September 14, 2020)

Of the two female Hungarian vocalists discussed here, neither were entitled to, nor would be entitled to royalties or advertising revenue from YouTube or other digital platforms such as Spotify when (as in the first case) or if (in the second case) signed. This income, from royalties and advertising revenue, however, is

earned by the record company or directly the male producer (if it indeed reaches them, which, as we have seen, is also dependent on platforms' relationship with collecting societies); a setup which makes the label—and indirectly the owner-producer—a rentier (Stahl 2013, 25) in the sense that he—practically invariably a *he*—makes money from intellectual property, on a product partly created by the labor and even financial investment (such as the video production costs) of a musician who receives no money in return.

Across industries and contexts of production, gender, as Anna Tsing (2009) argues, is mobilized to create a position of power for men that enables them to "superexploit"[24] women's labor. From this perspective, the structural inequality observed in the Hungarian case can be viewed as embedded into the long historical process of capitalism—including the global, digitalized music industries—incorporating gender relations in the process of the commodification of musical labor. In the hiphopified music world, the specific genre conventions— producing/beatmaking and rapping/singing—lend themselves well to these unequal gender relations: powerful male artists are credited and make income on tracks where they are singers/rappers and work with producers/beatmakers; yet they also capitalize on tracks they produce, where the selling point is not only, or not primarily their name, but rather a female voice and performer/character. Helen Reddington calls this phenomenon "ventriloquism," where female musicians, including as "seemingly powerful" artists as Cher or Beyoncé, are acting as "mouthpieces" of powerful male producers or production teams, who thereby co-opt the concept of female empowerment (Reddington 2018, 62–63). Some of the collaborations in the Hungarian hip hop world do indeed fit into this framework. Yet, even where the contribution of women can be argued to be less substantial in a given song, the fact that they are neither credited nor acknowledged for having written their parts applies. It is important to observe that this vulnerable position may also apply to male rappers/singers who work with more powerful artist-producers and/or are signed to labels, but the data available in my study is insufficient to state this. Nevertheless, a crucial difference is that male artists have the potential to move up in the hierarchy and become more powerful artist-producers themselves. This was exemplified by a singer-producer who, having enough of collaboration requests where he wrote his own parts or songs for others without being remunerated, founded his label in order to retain

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24   "Superexploitation" is defined by Tsing (2009, 158) "as exploitation that depends on so-called noneconomic factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexuality, age, and citizenship status. Superexploitation is exploitation greater than might be expected from general economic principles; the use of these so-called noneconomic factors to determine the rate of exploitation would be one conceivable use of the term. My use of this term does not require worker abjection, but it points to the inability of workers to negotiate the wage in the manner imagined in much of both Marxist and neo-classical economics: that is, as abstract 'labor,' without the obstacles of these 'cultural' factors. In the definition I use here, all exploitation is probably superexploitation."

ownership and make money: "I got tired of always being asked by someone to write them a song, to feature in their video, for which I receive no share, so I started my own label" (interview with a male singer and producer, September 3, 2020).

Such a route towards independence is not entirely inconceivable for female artists either, although it is certainly not easy—we have already observed the material difficulties and precarity involved, which also necessitates inventiveness and an active search for sponsors as well as collaborators. The female artist who had "broken away" from the record label, wrote and released her own songs via her own channel and constantly looked for collaborations. In the interview, she presented this as a route towards becoming an artist independent from others, particularly men exploiting her labor. For artists outside of record labels, collaborations restricted to individual songs are typically not sealed with a contract: "I never contracted for a *feat* or collaboration. […] There is no paperwork involved. It's a mutual agreement really" (interview with a female trap/pop singer and songwriter, October 22, 2020). In this case, the decisive factor is on whose channel the track is shared—usually the "main" channel, as opposed to that of the artist[s] featured.

The other artist's strategy was to integrate her music-making into her life as a full-time student—it was clear for her that music was, for now, a hobby.

> For me, [music] is more of a hobby, so I don't do anything that is not a pleasure. […] this has also to do with the fact that I did not sign a contract, because I did not want … I make music because I like doing it, and I wouldn't have wanted it to be compulsory and take the magic away so to speak—the reason why I'm doing it. (interview with a 21-year-old female trap/pop singer, September 14, 2020)

The musician is thus determined to maintain a clear symbolic boundary between music-making as pleasure, and music-making as work, which is signified, amongst other things, by a contract—to her, as soon as it becomes work, it involves compromise in the form of doing things she does not choose herself. Framing the lack of a contract as her decision to keep music as a hobby, although an important strategy to feel in control of her career and life, is nevertheless ambiguous, since it disregards the fact that she makes money for others in the meantime. This paradox arguably indicates the general status of amateur musicianship.

The same artist also expressed a desire to learn production—utilizing her professional network as well as digital and online tools—and take her creative career into her own hands:

> To be honest, my plan is to learn the technical as well too in order to become capable of doing the producing tasks myself too, and then I could write and create music on my own. I think that would be a better reflection of my own style, and perhaps I could

be more efficient and work faster if I do everything myself. [...] I've primarily thought I'd learn it at home, I have asked a few producers what applications they use, I would download those on my computer and apparently you can learn from YouTube videos on a basic level. (ibid.)

Lastly, there was also evidence of female solidarity in the hip hop world based on a recognition of shared, partly gender-based exploitation by the record label: "[Another female rapper] was also [on the label] at the time. We got on well and so together we said this is not fine. She was writing a lot of lyrics there and we saw that it was a rip-off" (interview with a female trap/pop singer and songwriter, October 22, 2020).

The Pop-Rock and Hip Hop Worlds through the Labor Process

The "hiphopified" popular music segment can be distinguished from the dominant, pop-rock-oriented "music industry" not only on the basis of genre aesthetic, but also a specific labor process (table 3.1). This labor process is partly shaped by genre conventions, as hip hop and its derivative styles hinge on a production process involving creating "beats," typically with the help of digital software, and recording vocals. It also frequently relies on cooperation—for instance, between beatmakers and vocalists, or between various songwriters who are also performers—and makes use of the digital platform ecosystem, in particular YouTube and Instagram, which provides the primary means of distribution and popularization (reaching and building audiences). One-off collaborations on a song are just as frequent as regular ones. Although these are embedded into a complex set of social relations, informed by subcultural affiliation as well as, often, friendship, and they are also organized by small labels and collectives, collaboration is also a strategy that is encouraged by platform optimization (Jones 2021), as it multiplies the chances for the audience discovering the song or encountering it again and again.

The hip hop music world is also distinguished from the dominant pop-rock world by its different position in relation to the state and the global market. Remaining largely excluded from the scope of cultural policy and therefore state funding, and invisible to music industry professional bodies, deprives the artists of both symbolic recognition—for instance, in the form of media publicity in more legitimate outlets (as opposed to the tabloid press) or being given a voice at music industry roundtables—and material resources. On the other hand, it lends them relative autonomy from political and ideological incorporation. The deprivation of material resources is offset by, firstly, domestic-based, low-budget

production making use of informal resources and labor; secondly, a reliance—or dependence—on corporate sponsors; and thirdly, direct exposure to global digital platform companies. The pace of musicians' work is dictated by the necessary frequency of "content" to be produced for the platforms to maintain visibility; moreover, the reliance on YouTube also requires the constant churning out of videos to accompany the songs. YouTube is characterized by a lack of transparency in terms of remuneration (Srnicek 2016; Siciliano 2021; Caplan and Gillespie 2020) and geographical inequality leaving semiperipheral artists at a disadvantage in terms of the income to be made as well as discoverability.

Table 3.1. The pop-rock-dominated "music industry" and the hip hop music world

Pop-rock	Hip hop
(Selective) state support	Exclusion from cultural policy Corporate sponsorship
Professional bodies and representation of interests	No professional bodies or representation of interests
Project-based labor organization (album, tour etc.)	Content- and platform-based labor organization (song and video etc.)
Star system	Platform-based competition (metrics) — global infrastructure
Band/artist as unit	Song as unit
Live music: festivals, club venues	Small club gigs
Multi-branch careers	Low-budget operation
Promoter as gatekeeper	Algorithm as gatekeeper
Networking	Network of collaboration
Masculine practices and spaces, gender division of labor	Masculine practices and spaces, gender division of labor and income
Digital entrepreneurship ("reluctant entrepreneurs")	Digital entrepreneurship (reluctant influencers)
Audience building as emotional labor	Commodification of intimacy, emotional labor

The ranking and rating system of platforms also encourages competition among musicians, ironically, among friends, members of the same collective, or otherwise collaborating. In addition, on YouTube and Instagram, musicians also compete with various other forms of content for users' attention. Fandom, as attachment to the artist, can anchor this attention; yet we have also seen that—again, due to the ways in which the architecture of digital platforms structures content— songs may become more important for listeners than the artists responsible for them. Moreover, the interviews confirmed that producing promotional content for digital platforms and the demands of communicating with followers significantly impacts the organization of daily life, strongly blurring the boundaries of work and non-work, as well as public and private. It also requires enhanced emotional labor and a rendering under the service of capital of the domestic sphere and personal relationships. We can observe a digital, global social factory at work (c.f. Terranova 2000; Csányi 2023). Although the workers of this social factory are not the "reluctant entrepreneurs" of Haynes and Marshall's (2018) study, they are nevertheless reluctant influencers, as the digital content produced for sponsors is placed in service of the promotion of their music, and getting their cultural products to as many listeners as possible, rather than making money or achieving high ranks as an end in itself.

The critical discourse on platformization is similar to critical approaches to digitalization in general in that they focus on the new—new forms of exploitation and control of labor by capital. Yet, these accounts partly also obscure the particular social relations and cultural logics that continue to shape platformized musical labor. The labor process-based analysis presented in the chapter demonstrates that we need a more nuanced approach to look beyond general observations made by studying the conditions offered by platforms' architecture and policies—which are also essential—to analyze the social embeddedness of platformized musical labor: a semiperipheral and feminist perspective reveals further inequalities in addition to the general exploitation of platform-based labor. Hierarchical gender relations, as we have seen, are permeating and fundamentally shaping the division of labor and remuneration in this music world. The semiperipheral perspective, moreover, also shows how the greatly unequal power relations between global platform companies and local intermediaries, such as collecting societies, place local players at a distinct disadvantage in relation to digital creators based in the global core.

CHAPTER 4

Gender Relations and the Role of the Household in Musical Labor

T he majority of studies on popular music production or music making have focused on public spaces of cultural activity and sociability: these include festivals (e.g., Dowd, Liddle, and Nelson 2004; McKay 2015) and urban, often nightlife spaces associated with subcultures and music scenes (e.g., Straw 1991; Stahl 2001), centered around venues, clubs, pubs, cultural centers, record shops, rehearsal rooms, studios, the streets, and the urban pathways linking these (Straw 2001). Works addressing the ways in which the domestic sphere and relationships associated with it—such as partnership, friendship, and family—help sustain and shape music making and production are relatively fewer in number. The distinction between public and private or domestic is a deeply significant one with regard to gender relations. Many of the mentioned public spaces associated with music making, especially rock culture, have been described as male-dominated and even exclusionary towards women. In their essay "Girls and Subcultures," Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber ([1975] 2007) made this point by offering an early feminist critique of the masculine bias of subcultural studies associated with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). They shifted their focus from the public sphere of the street with its bars and venues to the domestic space, where girls' bedrooms served as the locus of social activities similarly centered around music, fandom, and the consumption of youth cultural products to the male-dominated subcultures described in contemporary works associated with the CCCS. Sara Cohen similarly emphasized the contrast between rock culture's association with the "street" or the "road," posited against the domestic space and the bedroom, which are thus constructed as feminine spaces of "passive" consumption—as opposed to active production (Cohen 1997, 30). At the same time, Cohen also highlighted, albeit briefly, the essential role played by women, in particular as partners, and the domestic sphere in shaping the Liverpool indie rock music scene (Cohen 1991, 1997). This crucially takes place through the informal provision of various resources:

> Involvement of men with the scene's bands and business frequently depends upon financial and other support received from friends, relatives and partners, many of whom are women. Without such support a business like Liverpool Music House

would not survive, but even a successful musician like the singer of the Lightning
Seeds relies on his wife to help take care of the band's financial accounts. (Cohen
1997, 21)

Despite the sharpness of their insights, McRobbie and Garber's and Cohen's
calls to pay attention to the domestic sphere and women's active roles have not
been taken up by the vast body of literature produced in music subculture and
scene studies since. As an attempt to make amends towards this shortfall, while
at the same time remaining attentive to the specificities of the Hungarian con-
text, I place the comparatively neglected space of the semiperipheral household
at the center of this chapter, which, as I intend to show, is nevertheless crucial to
music production.

This shifting of focus helps us to unpack the historically shaped, hierarchi-
cal gender division of the public and the private or domestic to enable a better
understanding of the ways in which gender relations shape labor in music.
Instead of viewing the domestic merely in spatial terms, I focus on the household
as both a social space and a fundamental economic unit in the capitalist world-
system (Wallerstein, Martin, and Dickinson 1982; Wallerstein 1984). While the
household has undoubtedly played a central role in consumption, musical or
otherwise, it is also deeply integrated into the capitalist system of production,
including the cultural industries. Labor in the household ensures both short-
term (daily care work) and long-term social reproduction (the biological repro-
duction of workers), as well as direct productive and/or paid labor.[1] The latter
has historically included cottage industries or putting out systems, just as today's
home-based entrepreneurship and creative labor. As we have already seen in
the previous chapter, digital technology has provided new ways of channeling
home-based work into the (cultural) economy. Based on interviews, I examine,
firstly, the significance of the (digitalized) household as a source of labor and
resources supporting musical careers. Secondly, I look at how the channeling
of such labor and resources is embedded in social relations, such as the family,
partnerships, friendships, and cohabitation (housemates), and how it is shaped
by gender relations in particular.

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[1]   Whether and to what extent creative labor can be considered as productive labor from a Marxist
perspective, or indeed if this distinction is even useful to uphold (see e.g., Harvie 2005) is a
theoretical question I do not directly address here. It may, however, be argued that all crea-
tive labor integrated into the industrial production of music can be considered as productive.
Arguing the same, Kate MacNeill cites Marx, who stated that "an actor ... or even a clown ...
is a productive worker, if he works in the employ of a capitalist" (1951, 154–55, quoted in
MacNeill 2009, 304). Or: "Marx also provided the example of 'a writer [who] is a productive
worker not because he produces ideas, but in so far as he enriches the publisher who publishes
his works, or if he is wage worker for a capitalist' (1951, 154–55). The first example most
closely resembles the type of artistic labor that is conceived of in the context of the creative
industries framework" (311).

I begin the chapter with evoking autonomist Marxist feminist and world-systems perspectives to make sense of the ways in which the informal contributions of the household are structured by domestic gender relations. The feminist goal of centering the household also helps to foreground informal practices historically central to music production in (post)socialist Eastern Europe, as I show in the second part, where I address the role of households in informal musical production during the 1980s, preceding the end of state socialist regimes in the region. In the third section, I give a detailed account of the contribution of the household to musical careers today, and the ways in which gender relations shape these contributions. The fourth section focuses on the ways in which motherhood and childcare duties affect the gender division of labor in musical production, also reflecting on the particular effect of the COVID-19 crisis.

Reproductive Labor and the Household in the Capitalist World-System

"It may be argued that the gender division of labor in the household is the most fundamental of all social divisions"—writes Ursula Huws (2018, 111) in her discussion on the commodification and decommodification of reproductive labor in the formation of virtual (digitized and platformized) work. As authors belonging the theoretical and political tradition of autonomist Marxist or socialist feminism, such as Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James (1972), Wally Seccombe (1974), Silvia Federici (Cox and Federici 1976; Federici 2004, 2012), and others revealed, unpaid labor has constituted a foundational building block of the capitalist extraction of value. Besides other forms, including slave labor, exploited by western empires through colonization, its dominant form has been women's domestic labor, which centers around childbearing and -rearing, cleaning and other everyday domestic chores, care and emotional support for family members, intimacy and sexuality (through women's bodies being rendered as a natural resource; Werlhof 1980, 40), as well as consumption work (including purchasing and preparing food to eat). In the classic industrial capitalist setting, the housewife embodies this kind of labor, literally reproducing the labor force employed in waged work by bearing children and rearing them to become adult wage workers, and on a daily basis, by feeding the (male) wage laborer when he gets home from work, and ensuring that he can rest so that he is ready to return to his workplace on the following day. As Maria Mies states, "the typical capitalist worker" of the world-system, rather than the wage laborer, has been "the marginalized, housewifized, unfree laborer, most of them women" (Mies 1986, 116). In a historical perspective, Maria Mies (1986) described *housewifization*

as a process paralleling that of proletarianization (that is, becoming employed as a wage laborer). The two parallel processes constitute what Claudia von Werlhof (1984, 139) called "the Siamese twins of capitalism," highlighting both the structural function of the invisible labor performed in the household in maintaining the capitalist system and the active process of rendering this labor invisible (see also Werlhof 1983).

The division of labor within the household, moreover, has also (re)produced a specific social relation: the mentioned "forms of labor are linked to woman-hood, so the housewife is a structural position of capitalism" (Csányi 2023, 3). Although not all "housewifized" workers are women, the free reproductive labor dominantly performed by women within the household is regulated through a patriarchal social order, wherein women are rendered in a subordinate position. This "gender order" (McDowell 1991) is reinforced, culturally, through gender roles and specific constructions of masculinity—associated with wage labor and the public sphere, individual achievement and rationality—and femininity—associated with unpaid household labor and the private sphere, caring and emotions, thus an orientation towards others.

Since their primary goal was to reveal the exploitation of women through domestic labor rendered invisible by gender relations in the capitalist system, Federici (2004, 2012) and other feminist theorists from the autonomist Marxist tradition focus on the household primarily as a site of reproductive labor (c.f. Csányi 2023, 6). The semiproletarian households of the semiperiphery, however, have historically combined and contained various forms of labor, paid and unpaid, productive and reproductive, informal and formal (the last of these, as mentioned above, includes putting out systems just as family enterprises). Viewing the household in a world-systems analysis perspective, combined with insights from informality studies (e.g., Hart 1973, Portes 1983), is therefore more suitable for exploring, by highlighting historical continuities, the contribution of the household, and forms of informal labor to the music industries on the Eastern European semiperiphery.

In geographical terms, these studies have shown that the majority of invisible household labor is performed outside of the global core. In (semi)peripheral countries, wage labor has penetrated to a lesser extent than in the core. In such regions, households have remained semiproletarian and housewifized, and informal supplementary labor typically performed by women has continued to carry a greater weight up until today (Dunaway 2012).[2] Forms of labor centered in such households include reproductive labor, but also a rich variety of productive labor—in socialist Eastern Europe, typically homesteading and

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[2]   See also Wallerstein (1995, 27): "If we now look at global empirical reality throughout the time-space of historical capitalism, we suddenly discover that the location of wage-workers in semi-proletarian households has been the statistical norm."

entrepreneurship belonging under the so-called "second economy" (several authors refer to these as comprising [diverse] "labor portfolios"; e.g., Dunaway 2012, 2014; Broad 2014). As Susan Zimmermann (2010) shows in relation to state socialist Hungary, the changing relationship between paid and unpaid work, and the social struggles around this relationship, are crucial in constituting the gender regime. Moreover, diverse labor portfolios have ensured that on the (semi)periphery, households have played a crucial role in absorbing the damage caused by economic crises. At such times, these labor portfolios are typically rearranged by the housewife for a more effective, at the same time more self-exploitative operation:

> Households juggle diverse labor portfolios and manage crises through self-exploitation. During crises or shortfalls in basic needs, households have few options for broadening their resource pools (Rosas 2002). Consequently, they more deeply self-exploit by working longer hours, sleeping less and intensifying use of family labor. (Dunaway 2012, 218; see also Portes 1983; Smith and Wallerstein 1992)

In Hungary, this effect could be observed following the 1989/1990 regime change, after the 2008 global economic crisis, and arguably in the wake of the 2020/2021 COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis. Home-based (proto-) entrepreneurship was already established in the latter half of the socialist period, during the 1970s and 1980s, and thriving under the capitalist relations of the 1990s. This included agricultural labor—"homesteading"—performed as part of the "second economy"[3] (e.g., Galasi and Sziráczki 1985; Böröcz 1989), used by Hungarians during socialism—and beyond—"as a mechanism against food insecurity and shortages" (Faludi and Crosby 2021, 118), but also to complement wages with additional income by selling the produce; as well as other activities such as house building (Sík 1985); or private artisanship (Henshall Momsen 2002, 157).[4] The majority of "informal entrepreneurs" during this time are also formal wage workers (Böröcz 1989, 298; Henshall Momsen 2002, 158), constituting semiproletarian households (Dunaway 2012). As Janet Henshall Momsen also observes, many scholars addressing the exponentially growing Hungarian entrepreneurship during the early years of the 1990s' postsocialist period (Agócs and Agócs 1993; Róna-Tas 1994, 1997; Róna-Tas and Lengyel 1997; Lengyel and Tóth 1994; Gábor 1997) and Hungary's restructuring of its economy towards the tertiary sector (Timár 2002, 142) see a link between such activities and the pre-1989 private sector (Henshall Momsen 2002, 158).

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[3]   A region-specific notion to describe informal economic activities (Vigvári 2020, 242).

[4]   József Böröcz cites data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office time-budget microcensus, according to which "the second economy absorbed about 33% of the total basic labor time of the population in 1986" (KSH 1987, 13, quoted in Böröcz 1989, 296). This of course also includes second economy activity that is not home-based.

Regardless of this focus on "entrepreneurship" by many authors, however, the second economy partly functioned subsistence purposes both before and after 1989/1990, enabled and even facilitated by the state. The optimizing of labor portfolios ensured that informal production complemented wages, thus serving as a buffer during the postsocialist economic crisis and mass laying off of workers.[5] Besides officially registered self-employed entrepreneurs, moreover, much entrepreneurial activity was unofficial (156). The growing music industries at the time also relied on such entrepreneurship, often informal—of managers, record label owners, promoters, journalists, as well as musicians.

Gender relations have been shown to shape household-based labor not only in the sense of reproductive tasks primarily being assigned to women and simultaneously kept undervalued in society, but they have also been central to informal productive activities. On the one hand, women comprised a significant proportion of "official" entrepreneurs in the postsocialist period in Hungary (especially in specific sectors such as hospitality and tourism, the beauty and the clothing retail industry, or accounting [Henshall Momsen 2002]). Their home-based entrepreneurship in particular is aided by the uniquely lengthy, three-year parental leave that has been consistent since 1969 (Fodor and Kispeter 2014; Csányi and Kerényi 2021, 325). On the other hand, their typically unacknowledged contribution through reproductive labor, as well as invisible productive labor that formed part of family enterprises, was undoubtedly even more significant. Commenting on Hungarian women's position after the end of the state socialist regime, Henshall Momsen asks "how much of the initiative apparently being displayed in the transition economy is merely a tactical response to the crisis of employment and inadequate welfare systems rather than a true flowering of a newly rediscovered culture of enterprise" (Henshall Momsen 2002, 162). Much entrepreneurship, including, or especially women's, may in fact be regarded as forced—comprising "one part of a complex household jigsaw used to construct a livelihood in a rapidly changing economic environment," as she observes in relation to small businesses in rural areas (166).

A similar effect also became pronounced in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis—a situation which fundamentally shaped the gender regime in both symbolic and material terms (Csányi 2019, 125; Csányi 2024). As part of the hegemony building of the Fidesz governments after the political turn of 2010, we can observe strong efforts to restore, on a symbolic level, a gender regime based on the household gender division of labor, stressing women's role in giving birth to children and caring about them.[6] On a material level, the

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5   Indeed, by 1995, entrepreneurial activity accounted for one-fifth of employment in non-agricultural sectors, more than twice the OECD average (11%), around the average for Latin America (26%) (Gábor 1997, 164, quoted in Henshall Momsen 2002, 155).

6   Gergely Csányi (2019) summarizes these efforts under the term "alter-genderism," which has accompanied an "anti-genderism" on the symbolic and ideological level.

unequal division of informal labor—primarily work sustaining the household—as Csányi (2019, 129) reports based on time-use data of the Central Statistical Office (KSH 2012), had increased by 2009–2010, with women spending 1.82 times more on such work than men (including paid productive work outside the primary paid profession). Although this data can neither be understood as a direct effect of the crisis, nor does it tell us anything about the post-2010 period, it certainly indicates a tendency of the gender division of labor strengthening within Hungarian households. As part of managing the consequences of the 2008 crisis, the Fidesz government, as already the preceding socialist government, decreased or phased out social benefits, placing the costs of social reproduction on households (Csányi 2019, 129; Szikra 2013)—effectively, women. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, where many women bore the burden of job losses, a similar process of housewifization was also propelled by, first, the restrictions that forced people indoors, and second, digital technology which, through practices of "home office" or online schooling, disproportionately burdened mothers (Fodor et al. 2021; Somogyi et al. 2022).[7]

Musical Labor and the Household in the 1980s

In the following section, I highlight the contribution of domestic spaces and household resources to informal musical production during the 1980s, the final decade of state socialism in Hungary, and point to the ways in which gender relations shaped this contribution through interview data. Since the majority of the interviewed musicians and music industry workers were born in the 1980s or later, the picture provided will be inevitably fragmentary: there were 14 exceptions, seven of whom were born in the second half of the 1970s.

A rock musician and music journalist, in his early fifties at the time of the interview, described how his socialization into the underground rock music—more precisely, the punk and new wave—scenes of the 1980s, took place partly in domestic spaces. First, domestic spaces, bedrooms and entire flats were being used for formal—such as private tuition—and informal, collective or autodidactic, music education, as the following quote indicates: "I would attend a kind of music learning community to play guitar, which was awful, because there was guitar instruction going on at every point of the flat, and sometimes I was in the bathroom, sometimes in the bedroom" (interview with a male musician and music journalist, January 21, 2019).[8] Second, the same spaces were also frequently

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[7] Since the time of the research, the ongoing and extended crisis situation, including the breaking out of the Russia–Ukraine war and the subsequent energy crisis, has arguably also extended the reliance on households rearranging labor portfolios, with increasing self-exploitation.

[8] In the case of the two musicians quoted in this section, I omitted precise age information for purposes of preserving anonymity.

used for house parties, which comprised a crucial socialization space for youth at the time:

> [...] what was the most important is that there were house parties, and house parties were the places where fucking loads of people turned up. [...] There were no gigs there, just partying, but something like 80 to 150 people would easily turn up, so I know a great many people from there. (ibid.)

The interview indeed revealed that a good proportion of music industry contacts, fellow musicians, and media workers with whom he worked throughout the 1990s and up until the time of the interview, were either people he already met during this time in the 1980s, or were friends or acquaintances of such. The house parties and the acquaintances made there therefore served as crucial and long-term resources—in other words, as subcultural capital (Thornton 1995) formalized and utilized as social capital in the 1990s. For instance:

> A typical story goes like this, I enter the bathroom and there's a guy sitting in the bathtub, and that is Gábor,[9] okay, hello, hello, we talked, and then Gábor became Gábor Nagy, manager of [a well-known rock band still active today], he made the band big, and he also became a producer, still is, at [one of the main Hungarian record labels] [...], and acts as music producer of [a popular TV show], well this is how I know Gábor, from a bathtub. (ibid.)

The context of the use of domestic spaces for such activities is the lack of formal infrastructure, either for popular music education or socialization, and the illicit status of underground music making and networking. The interviewed musician made it evident, for instance, that the production and circulation of fanzines tied to the music scene were entangled with samizdat production[10] on the level of both the people involved and the subcultural infrastructure and communication media (Hodkinson 2002) utilized.

In the socialist context, informal practices centered around the household were endowed with political significance, and interpreted as antisystemic action (Vigvári 2020, 242; Szelényi 1988). While remaining outside the scope of studies on the so-called "second economy," the subcultural economy of music making as part of the 1980s' underground can also be interpreted as striving towards autonomy from the state socialist regime within the realm of music production.

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9   The name is fictitious.
10 Fanzines are DIY publications originating from the 1970s' and 1980s' punk scene (typically photocopied amateur-produced magazines), but today the term is more broadly used to signify fan-based or underground, "subcultural media" (Hodkinson 2002). Samizdat publications are associated with the Soviet Bloc and refer to underground, censored media forming part of dissident activity.

As I elaborated in chapter 1, the state control of music production, distribution, and performance simultaneously severely limited and enabled a certain room for maneuver for creative autonomy and resourceful expression. Similarly to underground—especially punk and post-punk, or indie—scenes in western countries, in particular the UK and the USA, emerging in the 1970s (punk) and the 1980s (indie in the UK, alternative rock in the USA) (e.g., Kruse 2003; Bannister 2006), the Hungarian underground music scene also involved a kind of Do-It-Yourself resourcefulness. Nevertheless, the available resources heavily relied on family background and family members' contributions: subcultural activities partly took place in domestic spaces owned by musicians' parents, with their support or at least tolerance. The following quote exemplifies the latter, evidently showing that the mentioned musician's parents worried about his political involvement through the scene: "[My friends in the scene] brought all kinds of samizdat publications, some of these ended up with me, and then my mum told me I really shouldn't be doing this, she's not sure this does us any good" (interview with a male musician and music journalist, January 21, 2019).

DIY resourcefulness can thus also be understood in relation to the use of private domestic spaces and infrastructure—an element of the subcultural infrastructure either not present to the same extent, or not discussed in western-based studies. Besides the mentioned networking, private homes, as the interview suggests, served as important locations for band practice and the copying of cassette tapes due to a lack of official access to recording and manufacturing infrastructure. As a musician narrated the process of recording: "Back then, studios looked like, there was a tape recorder in some[one's] flat, and then the sound technician, who worked as a sound technician somewhere, would be sitting in one room, and you would play and it would be recorded" (interview with a female musician, September 22, 2019).Within these domestic spaces, the ways in which resources were provided and allocated were not independent of social relations. The interviews with musicians starting out in this era[11] indicate that creative collaboration was embedded into personal relations such as child–parent relationships, friendships, and romantic partnerships. The experiences of a female underground musician active at around the same time as the above-quoted male musician vividly depict the ways in which availability of domestic spaces and resources depended on family relations. Parents—in her case, her mother—provided the space and infrastructure for bands to practice and party:

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[11]   Besides the quoted interview subjects, a third musician was also already active in this era, but as a professional musician in the army, which meant an entirely different route. For a male radio presenter growing up in the 1980s, watching films and listening to music at home and contributing to the school radio provided his way into the music and media industries. His career path in the media, however, only began after leaving secondary school in 1990, at the time of the regime change. The experiences of a manager already active in the 1980s, while partly embedded in the formal, state-sanctioned sphere of music production, confirms the essential role played by Do-It-Yourself practices.

Our apartment was in [an area in Budapest with characteristic tower blocks built in the 1970s],[12] we spent a lot of time there with [other musicians from the underground scene]. [...] We partied quite a bit in my mother's flat. I sent my folks away on the pretext that I had to prepare for my [secondary] school-leaving exams, but there was no studying. We ruined her apartment a bit, my poor mother. (interview with a female musician, September 22, 2019)

Or: "We did some partying—I had a friend [...] whose dad was a philosopher and he was hardly at home in Hungary, so [we were] in his flat. I mean house parties, there were no [public] places to speak of at that time" (ibid.). Besides partying, which, as we have seen, was a crucial space for establishing and stabilizing creative networks, domestic spaces and informal resources provided through family relations directly enabled the pursuit of creative activities:

And then in [another Budapest district], there was a place called a workers' dormitory, belonging to my mom's [new] husband's company, and there was no one there at the weekend, so we went there on Saturdays and Sundays, used an oil radiator, but rehearsed for eight hours a day at weekends. (ibid.)

The musician was at this time involved in a band that she formed with her male partner. Besides the band, they also established an underground cassette distribution company ("distro"), not only copying and distributing, but also compiling and releasing mixtapes and various recordings, including their own, documenting the scene. In the interview, however, the musician expressed her resentment at her former partner for omitting her from narratives of the 1980s' underground, rendering her contribution invisible: "I'm angry with [him] because he lies about these things. He makes it look as though he had done all of it" (ibid.). In her own narrative, she makes an explicit connection between this feeling of unfairness and the fact that the infrastructure for making music was accessible through *her* family:

With [my partner], we moved to [a small town near Budapest] to my mother's [summer] house. And this is also why it's interesting that he [talks about this] as his own [business], since most of the support all came from my side, we lived at ours for two years, that is, in my mother's [house] ... the first rehearsal room was also there. (ibid.)

The experiences of both musicians clearly indicate the crucial role of domestic spaces and household resources in music making in the underground scene(s) of 1980s' Hungary. They point to the involvement of parents—not necessarily willingly or in an openly supportive way—in partly providing the infrastructure for learning and making music, manufacturing and distributing recordings and

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12   Some information has been removed from the quotes to secure anonymity.

media. The experience of the female musician, moreover, also points to gender inequalities in terms of the division of labor and resources, as well as visibility and acknowledgement. Turning to the experience of younger musicians and music industry workers, growing up during the 1990s or 2000s, in the following section, I explore these issues further in the post-2010 period.

Musical Labor and the Household after 2010

My interview data indicates that family and household support in various forms of resources and as labor are crucial for musicians not only at the start of their careers, but also, in many cases, continuously. These resources and labor may take the following forms:

a) material
b) infrastructural
c) emotional
d) other "reproductive"
e) creative
f) other "productive"

In the following, I provide examples for each of these based on the analysis of the semi-structured and time-use interviews.

MATERIAL RESOURCES

Material resources include, firstly, housing support, such as living with parents or in an apartment purchased or owned by the parents, which was quite common in many cases.[13] As in the case of the female underground musician and her partner in the 1980s discussed above, living with parents enabled musicians and other workers to save money on rent and thus make their careers economically viable or at least sustainable. As a sound technician explained her decision to stay in her mother's house:

> I still live at my mom's, three of us live in a family house, two rooms are empty, because we have so much space, and besides, I wouldn't want to throw away 150–200 thousand forints[14] [on rent] if I have this opportunity. Just because one lives with

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[13] The proportion of multi-generation households continue to be relatively high in Hungary in European comparison, with only Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, Poland, Slovakia, and Lithuania ranking higher according to a 2008 study (the proportion of children below 17 living in households of three or more generations was 14.5%) (Iacovou and Skew 2011, quoted in Harcsa and Monostori 2017, 324).

[14] Approximately 385–510 euros.

their parents, that doesn't mean they're not self-reliant. I, of course, give money [to the household], I help out wherever I can. (interview with a 27-year-old female sound technician, March 24, 2020)

A singer, who also worked as a manager, and subsequently got a full-time job at a record label, explained her housing situation similarly:

> [I live] with my mom and my dad. I'm here in the family house, fortunately, I'm able to exist in a separate [space] in this house [...]—since I live in Budapest [...], I don't think it would make sense to move. [...] In the family nest, I am still safe and I don't have to worry about starving to death or whether I can pay the rent or not. (interview with a 24-year-old female singer, manager, and record label employee, April 5, 2020)

In both these cases, the location of the family home in Budapest, a clear advantage for pursuing a career in music, made the decision to stay with the parents easier. Nevertheless, the example of a film music composer showed that there are also instances where the economics of establishing and sustaining a music career drives one back to the parental home even if that home is away from the capital city:

> In 2017, I had this 2-million[-forint][15] income [from an exceptionally successful film music project], which is great, but I had to move back home because of this, I would buy studio gear, and after that, all I needed was a room, a cave where I could sit and make the absolute most out of this [opportunity]. [...] So I moved back home—if there are no additional costs [of living], that's only beneficial—[otherwise], it wasn't a problem for me. (interview with a 31-year-old male film music composer, July 3, 2020)

The reason the composer felt he had to move back to his parents' home was due to the circumstances of his success; both financially and in terms of his work having been accepted for a major Hollywood production. This situation strengthened his motivation to pursue a career in film music. The career decision subsequently necessitated an investment into production tools—home studio technology—but to be able to afford these, the musician needed to save on other costs such as the rent (and likely the expenses of living in the capital city as opposed to a smaller town). Being home-based and partly online, his work made him mobile ("all I needed was a room"); moreover, since he worked with international companies, he was not bound to the local scene in the same way as a performing artist would be. Similarly, a female musician who lived with her husband and young child in the suburbs of a Hungarian university town in a house built by her father explained how the relatively low utility bills, the general affordability of living in the town—as opposed to the capital city—together

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[15] Approximately 5140 euros.

with her musician husband's regular salary from a non-creative "day job" ensured a modest but sustainable living for them (interview with a 33-year-old female musician, April 11, 2019).

Material resources provided by members of the household or (extended) family also included lending money. This was typical for bigger expenses such as recording an album, yet in some cases, borrowing from parents or other relatives was more regular. The following exemplifies the first scenario:

> Because the record was self-released and I couldn't get the money together for it, we borrowed the money from my dad so that we could release it. So, one record costs 3000 forints and there is no distribution [of the income among the team] until my dad gets his money back. He would let it go, saying "get on with it" and "it's yours," but I don't want that. And I haven't been able to pay it back yet.[16] (interview with a 34-year-old female singer, songwriter, band leader, January 22, 2019)

In another case, I interviewed a male composer and instrumentalist, whose female partner was also present, and after a while, also joined the discussion (the couple had lived together for several years at the time of the interview). At one point, the female partner talked about how they had gone through difficult times before the composer began receiving more lucrative commissions more frequently:

> Musician's partner: We had burned through our savings and so on, so it is very difficult, you need to persevere, and if [my partner's] parents weren't there to help us, then [my partner] would also have joined the ranks [of people working day jobs]. So you need a certain background for this. [...] I don't know anybody, not even from our acquaintances, who would start out [in music] and immediately earn well—on the contrary.
>
> *- This is what I have also found, that having support from your parents is so important.*
>
> Musician's partner: At least in the beginning. Not for eternity, of course that's not possible.
>
> (interview with a 34-year-old male composer, songwriter, and instrumentalist and his non-musician partner, July 9, 2020)

This excerpt also makes it evident that where such support is unavailable, sustaining a career in music is extremely difficult. Although this undoubtedly explains the dominantly middle-class background of musicians and music industry

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[16]   In a UK context, George Musgrave discusses the prevalent feeling of indebtedness and arising guilt in connection with musicians—especially men—relying on material support from parents or partners, arguing that "their feelings of guilt stemmed from the financial indebtedness experienced as girlfriends or family members supported musicianship economically" (Musgrave 2023, 4).

workers at least in the pop-rock world,[17] it was also evident that family members would sometimes make great sacrifices to support careers in music. For example, a male singer-songwriter narrated how his divorced mother, who was herself in a difficult financial situation,[18] nevertheless sent him a regular amount when he was out of gigs—he emphasized that he did not understand "how she even afforded it" (interview with a 30-year-old male musician, January 23, 2019).

Finally, inheritance could also contribute to initiating or supporting musical careers. In one case, a brother and sister, both of whom work in the music industries, inherited money, which they were able to use to buy a house and turn part of it into a studio to use themselves as well as rent out. The latter enabled them to form networks that became crucial in their own careers as a musician and music manager, respectively (interview with a 36-year-old male musician, April 12, 2018). A parallel may be drawn here with pre- and post-1989 small entrepreneurship in Hungary, which also often relied on such family networks for material resources (Henshall Momsen 2002, 166).

INFRASTRUCTURAL RESOURCES

Infrastructural resources in the household include all facilities enabling creative as well as support tasks (Becker 1982): writing, practicing, and recording music, as well as managing musical projects from home with the help of digital and online technology, using domestic infrastructure and energy. The utilization of such characterized the work of all interviewed musicians and music industry workers. Based on the time-use interviews, the home typically served as a base where the workers would spend time during the day even if they also ran errands—for instance, attended business meetings in cafés—or went to a venue to perform later in the day.

Table 4.1 indicates the frequency of activities (number of occurrences) having taken place within the space of the home on the basis of 31 time-use interviews, each describing one working day's work activities (two interviews were excluded due to difficult comparability). Where these activities occurred several times during the day (e.g., a teaching session in the morning and another one in the afternoon), I calculated each occurrence separately. Nevertheless, there is significant variation in the duration of the activities: for instance, a music

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[17]   For similar arguments in a global core context, see, e.g., Bull (2019).

[18]   This is how the musician described his background growing up: "My parents got divorced when I was three years old I think. I stayed with my mom who always had a different job, then she had an enterprise, at that time we lived well, but that went bankrupt and then from when I was fifteen or sixteen, conditions at home were quite poor. My grandmother became paralyzed so my mom cared for her, a classic story from the provinces" (interview with a 30-year-old male musician, January 23, 2019).

manager's entire day consisted of organizing, speaking to, and emailing various industry people, venues, and so forth, yet since these activities were practically non-stop—she did not leave her laptop from morning until late in the evening, except to eat, and once to wash her hair and paint her nails—I calculated the respective activities once. In the case of musicians, similar activities took less—although still significant—time, typically one or two hours. Out of the thirty-one interviews, twenty of those interviewed were musicians (many of them also fulfilled other functions, but their musicianship was primary), six were managers (one also an event organizer), two promoters (one also an active musician), one sound engineer (who is also a musician), one music journalist, and one record label employee. In one case, the interviewed musician spent time in a collaborator's home as opposed to their own, which I also counted.

Table 4.1. Frequency of work activities taking place at home during the analyzed working day (based on 31 time-use interviews).

Work activities	Frequency
Communication with bandmates, direct colleagues, or clients	**12**
Communication with industry actors e.g. venues or radio, typically extensive emailing	**10**
Preparation for a gig or other event, e.g. interview	**7**
Creating or managing Facebook/Google ads, sending off ad design, creating communication plan	**6**
Planning/taking notes for a future creative project	4
Designing/creating social media post(s), taking and editing photos	4
Recording a track or part	4
Teaching music and preparation for teaching	4
Listening to radio, watching YouTube videos for professional reasons	3
Managing social media profile, checking activity, statistics	3
Mixing a track	2
Discussing song or project with partner (receiving creative support)	2
Writing music	2
Practicing for rehearsal	1
Writing book on music	1
Engaging in online education	1
Managing emails and other messages, prioritizing	1
Total occurrences	67

As the table indicates, the most frequent activities (in bold) were not strictly creative (that is, focused on the musical work), but rather centered around communication with direct colleagues, creative collaborators, as well as industry contacts (this of course constitutes the core of managers' work, but it also took up significant time for musicians). For these activities, the workers used laptops, tablets, and smartphones—and thus electricity. Music-making tasks such as recording, editing, or mixing require special software, instruments, as well as various other equipment. Some musicians had established or were in the process of establishing home studios. For instance: "I bought a sound card. What money I have made, I've been trying to reinvest in order to build a home studio for myself here at home" (interview with a 24-year-old female singer, manager, and record label employee, April 5, 2020). The more established home studio owners also emphasized that the investment this required was not only initial, but rather continuous: "Constant investment, newer and stronger computers, purchasing loads of software, loads of instrument packages, we're talking about millions of forints yearly, which I have had to put into this" (interview with a 36-year-old male composer, songwriter, and instrumentalist, July 9, 2020). Or:

> For instance, these libraries, these [samples] have also been recorded by somebody, it's no surprise they're so expensive—they paid, for instance, for Air Studio in London, they paid loads of orchestras, everything, for editing it all, the mixing ... it's amazing how many people's work is united in even when working from home. (interview with a 31-year-old male film music composer, July 3, 2020)

This quote is a reminder that care needs to be taken with general statements pertaining to the cheapness of digital technology, which presumably contributes to more democratic access. Nevertheless, in many other cases, musicians, managers, and other workers used a laptop together with free software, and a smartphone for communication and media consumption, thus kept their home-work infrastructure relatively cheap.

One interviewed musician, who shared a rented apartment with her boyfriend and a third flatmate, told me how she often used their flatmate's "mini studio" without having to pay for it (time-use interview with a 26-year-old female singer, December 7, 2019). The flatmate also occasionally helped her out with his skills in sound recording, thus also contributing creative labor in an informal setting.

The home, thus, clearly proved a crucial working space for many musicians and music industry workers. Managers in particular were self-employed and working from home. Even though in the time-use interviews I asked participants to describe working days, it was still striking that work activities were much more prevalent in the space of the home during daytime than activities relating to relaxation or leisure. Those interviewed did report some housework alongside

other work activities, but these were mostly basic tasks such as preparing food or relating to daily hygiene. Reproductive labor performed in the domestic space is also intertwined with productive (paid) musical labor. In one instance, a female singer who made some of her income through teaching, would spend twenty minutes tidying up before a student arrived (time-use interview with a 35-year-old female jazz singer, March 22, 2019). In the time-use interview, she explained that she does not like personal things, such as clothes lying around when a student is there. In her account, an additional twenty minutes was spent getting dressed properly (from the comfortable clothes she otherwise wears at home) and putting on make-up, which was followed by twenty minutes during which she prepared the songs for the singing class. Once the student arrived, she made coffee for them both—the first ten minutes of the class is reserved for settling in. These tasks constituted a seamless combination of emotional labor (elaborated in the following chapter), domestic work, and musical work (teaching), all nevertheless contributing to her making a living as a self-employed teacher.

Musicians at times also used—sometimes slept in—their collaborators' or bandmates' homes, and wrote, recorded, and mixed music in these colleagues' home studios. Restrictions related to COVID-19 made this even more frequent. For instance, a hip hop artist narrated how a collaborating artist had come to his flat during the preceding day (which at the time he shared with a fellow student, who he helped out as student halls had closed down due to the COVID-19 situation). They recorded demos in his home studio (without mastering, for which they would require a proper studio), then the collaborator slept over, they got up at half past ten the next day, and at around eleven, the interviewed musician went over to another collaborator's flat, where they worked until eight p.m. (at which time he had to leave because a curfew was in place) (time-use interview with a 21-year-old male hip hop artist, November 22, 2020). The examples illustrate that the pandemic-related restrictions contributed to the concentration of musical work in domestic spaces—to the effect of combining reproductive, social, and creative functions when musicians slept over if the work or socialization stretched into the curfew.

EMOTIONAL RESOURCES

Emotional support included a partner—typically female—discussing band conflicts or other difficulties with a—typically male—musician at home. As an example, a musician mentioned his feelings of disappointment resulting from an unsuccessful online advertisement that he had placed. He told his wife about this, and even though she was unable to offer professional advice, she performed the emotional work of reassuring him: "Because she is in PR and not marketing,

she is unable to give advice—so she comforted me that it would be better next time" (time-use interview with a 30-year-old male singer-songwriter, March 18, 2019). A female musician who lived with her partner, another musician, emphasized the importance of discussing issues in their working lives together: "[In the evenings] we usually tell each other about what has been going on, we discuss the conflicts, what he would have done [in my place], or me in his place, or we tell each other, you did well, you stood your ground" (interview with a 28-year-old female drummer, July 9, 2020). In the case of musician couples, or couples where both people worked in the music industries—a male musician and a female manager proved a typical setup—negotiating the boundaries of work and non-work was evidently complex and required significant emotional labor. I explore this in detail in chapter 5.

OTHER "REPRODUCTIVE"[19] LABOR

Partners and other members of the (extended) household or family performed important reproductive tasks, including childcare. I explore the gender dynamics involved in this in the following section. Besides childcare, as Cohen (1997) already observed in the mentioned study, women's labor in general provided an invisible hinterland to the spectacular world of rock and roll. In some cases, partners were there to share and absorb the emotional costs of the "rock and roll" lifestyle, and to—literally—clear up its mess. In a particularly illustrative case, a male artist narrated the following to illustrate his problems with alcohol, which he associated with constant touring:

> At that time I would do terrible things, I thought it was very rock and roll. I woke up [one morning] to the room being filled with ten- and twenty-thousand [forint] notes and I had no idea what had happened. And it turned out that I'd arrived home [at night], I took all our cash and pissed on the pile, "fuck capitalism," you know, whatever, and then my poor girlfriend had to lay out the notes soaked in piss to dry. This is not very cool. (interview with a 33-year-old male musician, January 30, 2019)

CREATIVE RESOURCES

Creative resources and support typically consisted of a partner—again, typically female—participating in the creative process by performing specific tasks as well as offering opinions and new ideas. As a musician narrated:

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[19] I use quotation marks when classifying certain activities as "productive" or "reproductive" to indicate that this is an ideological division historically constructed with the development of capitalism that has served to cement a gender-based order, as explained above.

> What I find really difficult is [non-musical] creative work such as who to ask to direct your video, what artwork I should have for the release of the next song, what the next record should be titled ... these are the things that are the most tiring for me. [But] my wife helps a lot. (interview with a 30-year-old male singer-songwriter, January 23, 2019)

The same musician also stated that his wife "is familiar with what I'm doing, and I regularly ask for her opinion and she has ideas" (ibid.). Female partners also regularly acted as a test audience: "I remember, when we were working on [a project], it helped a lot that I was able to talk it over with [my girlfriend] as a viewer" (interview with a 33-year-old male musician, January 30, 2019).

OTHER "PRODUCTIVE" LABOR

Other forms of productive labor provided informally within the household included tasks around management and administration (e.g., of finances). A male DJ's accountant wife would, for instance, help out with contracts and finances on occasions:

> *Does she help you?*
> Well, I don't necessarily need it, but if there's anything, yes. But the system is all set, thank God, contracts, and so on, so there's no need really. However, there are instances when something changes and then I ask her, but she always helps, yes, of course. (interview with a 46-year-old male musician, June 18, 2020)

Male musicians were also often managed by their female partners. The interviews offered direct evidence of this, for instance, in the case of a drummer, whose band was managed by his partner; but it was also mentioned as a tendency. As a manager observed: "I often see cases where, 'my girlfriend is the manager,' 'my wife is the manager,' 'my father is the manager,' even with big names" (interview with a 42-year-old female manager, January 31, 2022). In the interview, this manager was critical of this tendency on the grounds that such an arrangement goes against the principles of professionalism. Nevertheless, characteristically, she also mentioned that she had, for a long time, informally acted as manager of the band in which her husband played. The band also has an official manager, who represents the group towards the public, while she performs tasks that remain literally and purposefully invisible, in the background.

A lot of such work remains unpaid, performed out of love, enthusiasm, and commitment—but even in cases where the partner-manager is in a paid position, the boundaries between work and non-work, more precisely, productive labor and reproductive labor—care work performed within the household, as part of a partnership—are malleable and have to be constantly negotiated (a point to

which I return in the following chapter). The mentioned manager whose partner was the drummer in a band she managed talked about this negotiation by linking it to the difficulty of time management:

> The only difficulty is that there is no end to work time. And this is really not easy. But we have been trying to introduce various rules: we allocated time for meetings [between us] when we discuss the band or the other [projects] where we cooperate. But I still have to work on this, somehow he manages this a lot better. For him talking about work at any given time is no problem. I'm a bit overwhelmed with work at times and therefore it is more difficult for me to discuss work after the nth [task]. (time-use interview with a 26-year-old female manager, August 7, 2020)

The cited examples clearly show that the ways in which informal support and labor are provided and utilized in music careers are embedded in social relations within the household. Due to the precarious circumstances of musicians and music industry workers, especially the uncertainty of work prospects combined with the costliness of life in the capital city, the material and infrastructural support of parents is often necessary. Female partners, moreover, provide essential reproductive and productive labor, most of it unpaid and invisible, that contributes towards, even upholds male musicians' careers—while, as we have seen in the previous chapter, women continue to be actively discouraged from pursuing professional careers in music. A parallel may be drawn with Valerie Wilmer's account of the role performed by black American jazz performers' wives, quoted by Sara Cohen (1991, 209):

> A number of musicians' wives are actually involved in their work through soliciting and arranging gigs for them, answering their mail, completing their tax returns, compiling publicity and aiding their application for grants, as well as encouraging them to create even in their darkest moments. Yet, the idea of a wife or any other woman being involved to the extent of following them on gigs or turning up at rehearsals is generally considered restricting. (Wilmer 1987, 195)

The domestic sphere functions as a "natural" site of such informal, but also gendered, collaboration. The fact that emotional and creative support provided by their female partners was typically not named explicitly by male musicians in the interviews as a resource for establishing and maintaining careers in music—as opposed to, for instance, informal industry connections, which were explicitly stated as such—is an indication of the process and extent of its naturalization.

Music and Motherhood

Some authors have drawn parallels between unpaid reproductive labor and creative labor on the basis that they are both typically described as a calling; as "labor of love" that therefore does not require material remuneration (Shukaitis and Figiel 2019; Praznik 2021). Pointing to the ideology underlying the free or cheap status of both women's domestic labor and artistic labor, Katja Praznik argues that both are "economically devalued by being essentialized" (Praznik 2021, 41). The close relation of creative labor to the self, implied by myths of the self-realizing and self-sacrificing artist, as well as the obligation of "do what you love" is reminiscent of constructions of the "good mother" (Csányi and Kerényi 2021) or the caring wife that have contributed to naturalizing the patriarchal order of capitalism. There is, Praznik argues, a "contradiction between the exaltation of artists and the undervaluation of artists' labor [which] echoes that of an idealized femininity (angel in the house) whose normalized work similarly goes unrecognized" (Praznik 2021, 86), and it is the absence of payment in both cases[20] that makes labor invisible under capitalist relations (40–41). Praznik emphasizes the structural parallel between creative labor and women's domestic labor;[21] the previous section, at the same time, has shown that beyond a mere parallel, the work of musicians, to a significant extent concentrated within the domestic space, is deeply intertwined with domestic labor and the gender division of labor within the household. In the following, I look at the ways in which motherhood and the presence of childcare duties in the household increases this effect.

An interviewed female musician, while a stay-at-home mother, was also making use of digital and online tools accessible from the domestic space to start and manage a small-scale online enterprise related to music: "Now I have this project where I created a page which is, let's say, a life consultancy for musicians" (interview with a 33-year-old female musician, April 11, 2019). The webpage featured videos of her offering music-industry specific advice for musicians, make-up tutorials aimed at female performers, as well as promotional material for acts she managed through the page, including her husband's band and her own music. The page was interlinked with both Facebook and YouTube, which enabled a wider sharing and promotion of content. This practical use of time and

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[20]   Praznik's analysis focuses on the sphere of legitimate art, primarily the visual arts, as opposed to workers of the cultural industries in a broader sense. Of course a lot of work in the cultural industries is paid—but as this chapter has also shown, there is also much informal and unpaid or poorly paid work feeding into cultural production.

[21]   Based on a similar argumentation, Kylie Jarrett emphasizes the parallels between women's unpaid, invisible, housewifized labor and consumer labor on digital platforms, arguing that the "digital housewife" "manifests the kinds of immaterial and material practices that are integral to the digital media economy and has the same complex relationship to capital accumulation that feminist theorization has attributed to the unpaid domestic worker" (Jarrett 2015, 17).

domestic resources, enabling her to stay in music, but in a way that is adapted to her situation, resonates with Fodor and Kispeter's findings: "far from becoming inactive, many women on lengthy parental leave in the specific context of semiperipheral, resource-poor, post-communist Hungary navigate towards the informal labor market" (Fodor and Kispeter 2014, 385).

As Fodor and Kispeter's study shows, much entrepreneurial work done by stay-at-home mothers is informal, and a lot of it unpaid (e.g., contribution to family members' paid activities [Fodor and Kispeter 2014, 389]). At the same time, it is also possible to engage in formal entrepreneurial activity during this period, and the lump-sum tax of small enterprises (*kisadózó vállalkozások tételes adója*, KATA), introduced by the Fidesz government in 2013, arguably made this easier for many.[22] The interviews showed that this taxation scheme was crucial to both musicians and music industry workers, some of them praising the system for its flexibility and simplicity. The extent to which they were satisfied with it, however, varied according to their earnings, with better-earning musicians being more likely to be satisfied.

Musicians with children, where they could, relied on the extended family—especially female members—for support and resources. In a case where a female singer-songwriter's husband participated in looking after their child, enabling her to continue her career, so were female members of the extended family:

> The family network works really well. My mother-in-law has been retired since January this year. She looks after [the baby] a lot. My husband is freelance, he can also do a lot, and my husband's sister, she also looks after her loads. So I involve the family. My godmother and her family as well. (interview with a 32-year-old female musician, June 12, 2018)

Such help, however, was not always available. The stay-at-home mother female musician mentioned as the first example supported her husband materially, creatively, and emotionally while looking after her own career and business at the same time. As she observed with regard to investments necessary for the music career of her husband: "With my partner, I'm always like, I look at him with big understanding eyes and nod when we need to do something and I know we will never get back that ten-thousand-forint petrol cost" (interview with a 33-year-old female musician, April 11, 2019). Here, support is material and emotional at the same time, illustrating the intersection of spheres. The musician correspondingly emphasized family as an important value to her and expressed a desire to balance her musical career with her marriage and her children. She defined her future goals as

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22   The KATA scheme was terminated in September 2022 among loud protests from a wide variety of areas involved in small entrepreneurship, from cultural workers to skilled manual workers. Food delivery couriers were particularly active in organizing demonstrations (e.g., Mérce 2022).

[m]aking the best of [my] talent [...] in a way that it is not disadvantageous to the baby, that I do not take time away from her, but still dedicate time to myself. Keeping this in balance is more than an art. To be good in every area [...]—as a woman, as a mother, as a partner, as a musician, as everything. (ibid.)

Nevertheless, she also stressed that this "keeping in balance" was no easy task.

Although the musician distinguished between different roles according to her social relations with others—a woman, a mother to her children, a partner to her husband, and a musician—these roles intersected on the level of labor. Managing her husband's musical career besides her own—work she did without any payment—could be categorized both as cultural labor feeding into the music industries, and as emotional labor or care work that she performs within the household in her role as partner. In fact, she imagined an ideal future where these areas would not only be balanced, but as intertwined as possible. She framed this with a view of effectively managing time and shared material resources and infrastructure:

I want to make music with my partner. [...] Because we are already doing gigs together, I know it works. [...] I want to do this with him and it is entirely for practical reasons. [...] We only need room [in the car] for a set of drums and a guitar. And it's more than enough to have to harmonize time schedules between two people. (interview with a 33-year-old female musician, April 11, 2019)

The obligations of the caring wife and mother are thus inextricably intertwined with musical labor: making music, online promotion, organizing, and management. This leads to labor and resources supporting musical careers, being thus embedded in household gender relations and performed free, becoming doubly obscured.

The desire expressed by the musician "not to take time away" from the child draws on the ideal of the "good woman," which Mies describes as the "woman as mother and housewife, and the family as her arena, the privatized arena of consumption and 'love,' excluded and sheltered from the arena of production and accumulation, where men reign" (Mies 1986, 103). In a similar vein, another female musician, single at the time of the interview, expressed her desire to have a family later on, and her parallel "terror" of "not being a good mother" while also pursuing a career in music (interview with a 31-year-old female singer-songwriter, June 6, 2018). The ideal of the "good mother," however, is itself embedded in, and therefore shifting with, historical and geographical contexts. Csányi and Kerényi describe the mother figure implied in "the contemporary myth of the 'good mother' in Hungary" as

somebody who is striving to give the best to her children and entire family in every situation and on every level all by herself, by making conscious choices: she cares and

entertains at the same time, binds the family together, and places her needs, if she has them, behind those of the family. (Csányi and Kerényi 2021, 328)

The post-2010 Fidesz governments have made active use of such cultural representations as part of their pro-natalist policy (ibid.).

Although the interviewed musician-mothers emphasized their own career goals as artists—as opposed to merely rendering them subservient to the needs of their families and leaving "the arena of production and accumulation" to men—they also openly communicated their struggles to be good mothers and wives, and made use of social media to present an image of a *good creative mother* able to efficiently integrate these various aspects into their lives.[23] This applies to the quoted musician mother running the music-related enterprise, whose online self-presentation and communication in general is characterized by a seamless blending of her musical activities with the depiction of her wedding and marriage, pregnancies, expressions of love for her husband and child, and a celebration—and simultaneous promotion—of her husband's achievements as a musician. In one of her coaching videos, she advises artists to choose between two strategies regarding the management of their online presence: drawing a clear boundary between their professional and private lives and not posting, for instance, about their families; or integrating their private lives into their social media presence. While she speaks, classic rock music plays in the background, mixed quite loud, representing her own musical image, but we also hear occasional baby sounds from her room where she recorded the video, which are highlighted with "cute" animation edited into the video. This visual and aural representation style clearly indicates that she herself subscribes to the second strategy.

Another female singer-songwriter with a young child followed a similar online strategy while expecting her second baby and after giving birth. Along with promoting new music and live gigs, she also wrote posts in a purportedly sincere tone about motherhood and childbirth, as well as sharing details of—successfully—managing motherhood and the lifestyle of a performing artist:

> Many people have asked where [the 3-month-old child] was during [the show]. I nursed her right before the gig at our accommodation, which was five minutes from [the venue], she fell asleep at 8 and I was back with her by 2 am when she woke up. (Facebook post, interviewed 32-year-old female musician)

Notably, the questions from her audience to which she refers imply an expectation that she is a "good mother" as well as a successful performer—a clearly gender-based expectation to which male artists do not have to conform.

Through the strategy of integrating their private life into their social media presence, these artists simultaneously make invisible reproductive labor visible

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23   I also analyzed the following two examples in Barna (2022a).

and assert themselves as female artists in the patriarchal world of the music industries through digital technology. At the same time, such strategies also fall into the trend of a new, mediated domesticity (Faludi and Crosby 2021), which does not in any way challenge the hegemonic restorative gender policy of the government. Reproductive tasks still predominantly remain with women, thus, the domestic division of labor appears intact. Faludi and Crosby employ the concept of "Superwoman Syndrome" to describe (Hungarian) "women perform[ing] fantastic feats that are posted on social media" during the COVID-19 lockdown era (Faludi and Crosby 2021, 119). The examples above, however, indicate that this tendency had already existed before the pandemic.

Tensions between musical careers and reproductive labor, especially relating to childcare, although not necessarily felt at a given moment, become evident in a longer life-course perspective. In other words, the mentioned precarious balance may be kept for a certain period, the experience of relatively older musicians indicates that this typically becomes problematic on a longer term. The following quote implies that there is a general awareness of this difficulty among musicians and music industry workers: "In my profession, there are not many fifty-year-olds I can name who have a family and children and they live happily … somehow this doesn't fit" (interview with a 27-year-old male sound engineer with one child, no longer living with the child's mother, April 4, 2020). As another male music industry worker put it: "It really is difficult, and I totally understand why families fall apart. And, of course, we have tricky times as well, but [my partner] is also in the arts, so she's quite open about these things, and she has a fairly high level of tolerance" (interview with a 40-year-old male sound engineer and musician with two children, March 11, 2019). The allusion to "high level of tolerance" demonstrates an expectation of extra emotional labor from female partners to tolerate the demands of a "rock and roll" lifestyle associated with touring, seasonality, working in the evenings and weekends, flexibility, as well as a general insecurity.

The first sound engineer talks about his former relationship in the following way:

> It was a good symbiosis, a sound engineer and a singer, this was a really good match, and for this reason, she was perfectly aware of how much work it is and what this life involves. But then somehow, when we started a family, then it became more difficult [for her] to understand. It can be awfully difficult for a woman […] that the other person is constantly on the road. (interview with a 27-year-old male sound engineer, April 4, 2020)

According to this statement, the sound engineer does not appear to question patriarchal gender roles, assuming that it is primarily the woman's task to stay at home with a young child, while her male partner continues his paid job away from home. The quote also highlights the birth of a child being a decisive moment that almost automatically restores patriarchal gender roles.

The COVID-19 lockdown period, during which, as we have already seen in the previous chapters, performing artists had lost the possibility to play live, and thus earn from performances, for at least a couple of months, proved another factor contributing to the reaffirming of patriarchal gender roles and the house-wifization of (musical) labor. The case of a musician couple with three children was illustrative of this. The couple normally make most of their income from extensive touring: "In sum, we make our living from our [joint] performances, since we do very many performances, we always have at least twenty-something performances per month. That's not a bad number" (interview with a 39-year-old female musician, July 10, 2020). To be able to do this with three children, prior to COVID-19, they had relied on—again, mostly female—help in the form of reproductive labor, including childcare, from the extended family, as some of the already quoted musician-mothers or households with children:

> In summer, and when we have these [busy] periods, we always have help. At the moment we live with my father's [family], because he [re]married, but they're going to move. But they love the children and [spend time] with them. And we have my Nan, who is 90 years old but still head of the family. There's my mother, and my dear [female] friend, who has helped an immense amount with each child. So with us, it's a logistics magic, who has time for what, who comes at what time to replace someone else. (ibid.)

It appears that this intra-familial system of sharing infrastructural, material, emotional, and creative resources, although complex, may have been in balance before the pandemic. Yet, the crisis situation upset this order and pushed the nuclear family into a strict patriarchal division of labor, in which the musician-mother felt stranded. Because of safety measures, individual households became isolated; contact, especially with elderly people, was limited, cutting off vital help with domestic work. At the time when I conducted the interview, in July 2020, the husband had picked up a non-musical "day job" in construction—work that was relatively easily available for men when the pandemic broke out. In addition, he also did odd jobs related to his musical career, in particular for sponsorship (advertising certain products). His wife was mostly busy at home with reproductive tasks such as childcare, including helping the three children with online schooling—a huge task that families had to take on during the time of restrictions, and once again it was mostly mothers who assumed this duty (Fodor et al. 2021; Somogyi et al. 2022). She also engaged in some creative labor—songwriting—while managing the schedule of her husband. In addition, she mentioned that by the time of the interview, they had already begun playing gigs, although in a reduced number, since audiences were restricted to five hundred during the summer of 2020. In general, she was deeply unhappy with this setup, in particular being on her own at home and having no time, nor energy for music-related work, including teaching:

Now there is no time left for anything. You cannot do anything, you cannot do any practice. Normally I'd have students, but I told them not to come until September, because I can't even remember my own name at the moment, I can't concentrate. […] I never want to be in this period again, and if I have to continue, I don't know how I will manage with the three kids, because this period for me is hell. To live through this while he is never here, I'm unable to call him as he is up to his neck in drywall mud or doing woodwork. (interview with a 39-year-old female musician, July 10, 2020)

She also explained how her husband's day job left him with little time or energy to be with the children, nor to organize his music-related work, leaving her to perform such tasks for him: "He is exhausted once he arrives home, he has no energy to spend time with the little ones. […] Last night he finished [construction] work at the house, he came home, and I prepared his schedule for today—[me], the secretary" (ibid.). The last one is a slightly sarcastic comment on her shifting to a stereotypically female background role.

The musician's experience fits into a broader pattern Beáta Nagy and her co-researchers found among Hungarian mothers during the first lockdown period (spring 2020):

Mothers—apart from one or two exceptions—automatically became responsible for the performing and managing of all unpaid reproductive labor. The volume of this unpaid labor had significantly increased compared to before: besides housework, caring for and educating children during the day also fell on families—meaning women. Refamilization has strengthened and multiplied the tasks of mothers. (Kránitz 2020; see also Nagy et al. 2023)

These findings confirm that informal household labor, whether contributing towards social reproduction or production—in the music industries—plays a particularly significant role in absorbing the costs of economic crises on the semiperiphery. Moreover, in the household division of labor, mothers tend to take on more of these tasks. We have also observed self-presentational strategies on the part of some musician-mothers directly aimed at making the intersections of creative and reproductive labor visible through digital technology via social media. On the one hand, this helps them to challenge the forces that render such labor invisible in the capitalist system and its patriarchal order. On the other hand, it is also in line with a new, digital domesticity, a "deepening mediatized 'housewifization' [in which] 'old institutions' still prevail," as Faludi and Crosby (2021, 117) argue. Moreover, the representation of domesticity in the online self-presentation of creative "good mothers" also falls in line with the conservative, restorative symbolic politics—or familialism (Somogyi et al. 2022)—of the post-2010 Orbán governments, where "family" above all is emphasized as a value (Csányi 2024; Fodor 2022).

Musical Labor and the Semiperipheral Household

The examples have shown that domestic spaces, informal labor concentrated in the household, and a reliance on—in many cases extended—family relations have played a crucial role in musical labor in the popular music industries in Hungary. During the 1980s, in the late state socialist era, informal learning, and music production and dissemination in the context of the underground, much of which took place in domestic settings, were primarily a response to strict state control of music industry and media infrastructure. Musicians were active in creating their own infrastructure for rehearsing, playing live, socializing, record-ing and distributing music, which then served as an important basis for estab-lishing and operating formal music industry institutions in the 1990s (as Anna Szemere [2001] also shows). This informal, domestic-based scene is also where music industry networks still relevant today began to be formed. Even though creative labor has been missing from accounts of the "second economy" in the Hungarian context, this process is parallel to proto-entrepreneurship in the "sec-ond economy" feeding into entrepreneurship in the postsocialist era (Henshall Momsen 2002; Timár 2002). The reliance on family networks, especially by women, can also be viewed as continuous. Zimmermann observes how during the state socialist period, women, while working (at least) double shifts as wage workers and doing the lion's share of domestic work, also developed "a culture of mutual self-help" amongst themselves "in neighborhoods, firms, and the family," and "brought female members of the extended family systematically into the network of child-care and housekeeping" (Zimmermann 2010, 14). Henshall Momsen also emphasizes that loans and labor lent by extended family members were essential in small entrepreneurship both before and after the end of state socialism (Henshall Momsen 2002, 166).

Today, after the 2008 economic crisis, popular music careers, as already shown in the previous chapters, are highly precarious. Family support with hous-ing as well as important financial investments are an essential resource for many musicians and music industry workers, without which they would be unable to embark on, or to continue, such careers. The availability of digital technology, and its easy use in domestic spaces, has undoubtedly opened up music-related activities for many, but digital technology is not necessarily cheap: many musi-cians, as we have seen, continuously invest in their home studios and software. For managers or promoters, however, the domestic space and relatively simple technology may serve as a convenient—if isolated—work space (where the boundaries of work and non-work are often non-existent, leading to easy self-ex-ploitation, as we have already seen in the previous chapter). The 2015 ProArt Hungarian music industry report observes that a reliance on "multi-branch careers" has secured a kind of resilience for the creative industries in the EU,

including music, ensuring that it was less badly hit by the 2008 economic crisis than many other areas (Antal 2015, 13). Here I have attempted to point to the informal resources, and the (self-)exploitation taking place within households, to a significant extent along a patriarchal division of labor, that has made such resilience possible. Besides non-music "day jobs"—of both music industry workers and their partners—such informal resources provide a relatively secure hinterland for music careers, making work in popular music, otherwise untenable for most, sustainable. We have also seen that the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic crisis has further enhanced the significance of these resources.

The sphere of household-based informality can counter the profit-driven operation of the industry and its mechanisms of exclusion discussed in chapter 3. Working with and receiving creative and emotional support from partners or other family members can be vital while attempting to succeed or at least stay afloat in a highly competitive, individualistic, and unpredictable professional area. Working from the space of the home, utilizing digital and online tools may also be a refuge, a safer space—away from the exclusionary masculine practices and gatekeeping—where women, at least those with a relatively secure, middle-class family background, preferably enjoying some family support, have a space to experiment and attempt to establish themselves in the profession. Yet, the above examples have also demonstrated that gender relations significantly structure the allocation of resources and the division of labor—creative, reproductive, emotional—in the household. Virginia Woolf's (1929) famous concept of "a room of one's own" has served as a popular metaphor for female musicians' use of the bedroom as a recording studio, or a space for practice and composition, especially in relation to the emergence of digital technology (e.g., Wolfe 2012; Björck 2013). The metaphor suggests that for women, a space that guarantees insulation from the competitive masculine domain and patriarchal relations of the music industries may be crucial in the pursuit of musical paths. What interpretations of technology as a potential democratizing and emancipatory force fail to emphasize, however, is that the ideal "room of one's own" is an autonomous working and creative space free from overwhelming obligations of housework and care work—yet the domestic space, as we have seen, does not automatically provide this for women, on the contrary. The domestic space, moreover, is not necessarily "safe" either. The experience of domestic violence also occurred in one interview with a female musician, whose former partner—also a musician and a prominent member of the scene—was physically violent with her. Her experience, moreover, showed that such violence was combined with other kinds of abuse: a simultaneous making use of informal resources provided by her and her creative work, which she felt had been made invisible in the scene. Even though her negative experience stood out in terms of its extremity from the other interviews, unequal gender relations in the household crucially shaped

musical labor, and women's invisible contributions helped sustain it in the 1980s just as today, in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, in the same way as invisible labor and the (self-)exploitation of women have historically sustained the system of capital accumulation.

Emotional Labor in Music Production

As we have already seen, the lack of easy separation between "work" and "life" is among the most widespread observations in recent scholarly accounts of cultural or creative labor. The expectation that works of art—in this case, popular songs—are deeply connected to, and expressive of, the feelings of songwriters and the artists performing them, and are thus connected to their private lives and based on their personal experiences, is also nothing new. In this chapter, however, I specifically address the ways in which musicians and music industry workers construct, dissolve or negotiate the boundaries between work and non-work, between professional and personal relations in relation to making music. I look at how this labor of negotiation is divided, how it is gendered, and how it is embedded into the power relations of the music industries. Chapter 4 has demonstrated that musical labor on the semiperiphery is deeply embedded, economically and socially, in households and the labor and resources informally provided therein, and pointed to the ways in which gender and family relations shape music-related work and its division. I proceed to explore how these broader social networks and relations, such as friendship and intimate relationships, are integrated into, managed in, and complicated by musical labor. The analysis primarily draws on Arlie Hochschild's (1983) theory of emotional labor, arguing for its relevance in the context of the mixed economy of popular music.

Emotional Labor and Relational Labor

As observed in the previous chapter, the productive–reproductive labor divide of industrial capitalism has contributed to the cementing of patriarchal gender relations by assigning the former predominantly to men and the latter to women. At the same time, the emerging social and symbolic division does not mean that the "feminine" realm of emotions has not become an integral part of the productive sphere. Eva Illouz (2007) demonstrates how, in the twentieth century, the theory and ideology of management, drawing on "therapeutic culture" influenced by psychological theory and practice, contributed to a concern with emotions permeating the realm of formal (wage) labor, developing what she terms "emotional capitalism." "[W]hereas Victorian emotional culture had

divided men and women through the axis of the public and private spheres," she argues, "the twentieth-century therapeutic culture slowly eroded and reshuffled these boundaries by making emotional life central to the workplace" (Illouz 2007, 33–34). Complementing classic accounts of the labor process in the factory (Braverman 1974; Friedman 1977; Burawoy 1979), Illouz suggests that Elton Mayo's Hawthorne experiments and its conclusions emphasized the significance of personal relations in productivity over personal traits such as "loyalty" or "reliability" (Illouz 2007, 28). Mayo's research hugely contributed to integrating psychology and "human relations" into management. His findings, according to Illouz, suggested that a good manager displayed "the attributes of a good psychologist: it required being able to grasp, listen to, and deal dispassionately with the complex emotional nature of social transactions in the workplace" (31). Illouz also points out that in addition to bringing in a language of emotions, "[b]y suggesting that conflicts were not a matter of competition over scarce resources but rather resulted from tangled emotions, personality factors, and unresolved psychological conflicts, Mayo established a discursive continuity between the family and the workplace" (31).

The suggestion, attributed to Mayo by Illouz, according to which conflicts, rather than expressing competition over scarce resources, should be viewed as resulting from "tangled emotions, personality factors, and unresolved psychological conflicts" (Illouz 2007, 31) contributed to an obscuring of exploitation and labor–capital tension behind alienation. The task following from this is to undo this obscuring by focusing on the "tangled emotions" and "personality factors" from which value is extracted in the cultural industries. Arlie R. Hochschild's work is a good starting point for this endeavor. Through a study of the work of flight attendants and bill collectors—"two extremes of occupational demand on feeling" (Hochschild 1983, 16)—Hochschild theorized "emotional labor" as the management of feeling sold as labor in a capitalist economy: "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has *exchange value*" (7; highlight in original). She conceptually distinguished emotional labor thus defined from "emotion work" or "emotion management," performed in "private contexts" and therefore having use value (ibid.). The primary contributions of this work include showing, firstly, how the requirement of "deep acting," which involves management of our innermost feelings—as opposed to, for instance, presenting a superficial smile—places a particular demand on workers and contributes to their alienation—not only from their work, but from their own selves. Secondly, it demonstrated how both employer requirements and the strategies employed by workers—deep or surface acting—transformed along with broader economic shifts affecting the industry. Hochschild's focus on flight attendants, thirdly, also highlighted the gendered demands of emotional labor: these workers were

required to conform to highly sexist expectations in line with the gender power structures of their working environment, namely an (at least initially) predominantly male clientele served by a female service crew. Although Hochschild conceptually distinguishes between the private and the public domain (that of wage labor), the theory of emotional labor also highlights continuities between women's social roles rooted in their function in the household and demands placed on them in the formal world of work.

Paul Brook has criticized Hochschild for "dichotomi[zing] the distinction between emotion management in the 'private-self' sphere and the commodified 'public-self' realm" (Brook 2009, 532) and argued for applying the concept of emotional labor "to industries and areas of work beyond commercial front-line services" (539). Hochschild's theory, according to Brook, enables this on the grounds of her "foundational use of Marx's wage-labour concept, which implies that the pre-condition for the production of 'emotional labour' is fulfilled at the point workers' labour power converts into wage-labour (Hyman, 2006; Thompson [1983] 1989), in the same way as for physical and mental labour" (Brook 2009, 539). In this vein, I ask the question of how emotional labor forms part of the mixed, formal and informal economy of cultural labor, which is integrated into the cultural industries, but, especially on the semiperiphery, typically performed in the context of neoliberal entrepreneurship anchored in the household. Similar to emotional labor, artistic creation (and its support) can be felt as the expression of one's self and, therefore, deeply individual—yet at the same time, in the cultural industries, it becomes paid labor and subject to demands of a capitalist economy. Beyond a mere parallel, however, emotional labor is deeply integrated in the labor of cultural workers, as shown by the studies of Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2008) in the context of the television industry, or Watson and Ward (2013), who explore the specificities of emotional labor in the context of the recording studio. Hesmondhalgh and Baker highlight, for example, the emotional burden on junior television workers in managing tension arising from the demands of a powerful television network from the independent company commissioned to produce a talent show. They also detail the specific emotional labor these workers perform by communicating with the young participants of the show, a type of television program where the stakes are particularly high for participants: the promise of fame and the pursuit of an artistic career versus going back to being unknown. Hesmondhalgh and Baker's analysis connects emotional labor with power—power relations within and among industry organizations as well as the symbolic power of creative workers in mass media. In the context of the recording studio, Watson and Ward focus on the emotional labor of producers and engineers, performed in order to move the performing musician, thus eliciting specific emotions deemed crucial to the creative process. They "create the right vibe" in the studio—"a relaxing atmosphere" (2911)—

while also performing a lot of tolerance of artists' behavior, including, at times, managing their substance abuse in the space of the studio (2912–13).

As already discussed in chapter 4, Baym employs the narrower concept of "relational labor [of connection]" in a popular music context to ask "how the complementary dialectics of personal relationships and professional labor play out in the ever-changing flux and flow of everyday interaction" (Baym 2015, 16). She points to the increased demands on artists to maintain interaction with their audience in the digitalized music industries. Echoing both Hochschild and Illouz, but drawing more directly on Lisa Adkins' (2001) work, she interprets this trend within a process of "the cultural feminization of economic life," where "the work itself is feminized and disrupts gender binaries" (Baym 2015, 18). Work, she argues, is increasingly "immaterial, service-oriented, and tied to managing one's own and others' emotions through communication and managing one's bodily appearance" (Baym 2015, 18; see also Taylor 2015). In the chapter, I make use of Hochschild's concept of emotional labor, and understand of relational labor as a specific function of emotional labor.

Emotional Labor and Care in Musical Collaboration[1]

In the working relationships of music making—that is, relations among band members, between artists and managers, musicians and sound engineers, and so on—professional considerations, both aesthetic and economic, become interweaved with personal feelings and relations. The continuous management and negotiation of these feelings and relations requires emotional labor. On the one hand, personal feelings, for example of friendship, provide a source of meaningful connection, with the potential to disembed creative activities from the logic of capital accumulation and alienation. Yet, as we will see, the (self-)allocation of such labor is partly also embedded in unequal gender relations. This section looks at the particularities, division, and significance of such labor in relation to creative collaboration among musicians.

Musicians' narratives indicated that thinking about and negotiating personal feelings and relations take up considerable time and require deliberate effort, and that this emotional labor is closely linked to the collaborative creative process. Some musicians emphasized the necessity of "tuning in" (a recurring term in the interviews) with their collaborator(s), or setting the scene, whether the collaboration was regular or occasional—for instance, before rehearsal or writing a song

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[1]   Some of the examples from individual interviews (but not the sociodrama) presented in this section and the following one were also discussed in Barna (2022b).

together. This required setting time aside. "With [the musicians I currently work with], rehearsals proceed in a way that we get together, sit down, talk, and then begin to make music" (interview with a 28-year-old female drummer, July 9, 2020).

In the case of regular collaborations in particular, the necessity of "tuning in," or connecting on a personal level, was linked to the ability to connect in a musical (aesthetic) sense. A jazz singer referred to a more profound knowledge of the people she played music with, which contributed to their effective playing together. This deeper knowledge stemmed from a shared experience, not necessarily musical—a sense of having gone through things together:

> The more we know one another within a band, the more we love one another. We are familiar with the vulnerable side of the other person, their evil side, any side. The more you can connect to [the musicians] musically, the more you go through together. (interview with a 35-year-old female jazz singer, January 22, 2019)

The musician also emphasized the challenges of managing interpersonal relations and conflicts within a band, a task she felt responsible for in her front-person and band leader role. This role also involves managing the affairs of the band in a practical sense, which in her perspective, blends seamlessly with care work:

> I have to say that each of [my musicians] has expressed that out of all the projects they are involved in, this is *the* band for them. The number one. But this is probably because I solve everything for them. They really don't have to deal with organizing at all [...]. They are always paid. I don't screw them over. I keep my word. I love them. I listen to them. I call them. I pamper them. (interview with a 35-year-old female jazz singer, January 22, 2019)

In this case, responsibility for the management of personal relationships and care was assumed by a woman in a formally leading position in a band. In other cases, however, women in other positions assumed this role. Due to the relatively low number of female musicians, where women were members of a band, they were often the only ones, surrounded by male musicians. The female drummer quoted above talked about her approach to managing conflicts within her band in a way that parallels the jazz singer's narrative:

> If there's a conflict in the band, I always say, hey listen, and then they'd say, let's leave it, it's okay. But then I always continue by telling them it's not okay. Tell me [what it is] and I will pay attention to the words I use, and you will pay attention to whatever is bothering me. And there it is, a problem solved. (interview with a 28-year-old female drummer, July 9, 2020)

Although this latter musician was not in a front role, she still assumed responsibility for maintaining a healthy interpersonal atmosphere within the band.

One participant in a sociodrama group, a female cellist, illustrated the connection between womanhood and performing emotional labor related to care and managing personal relations in musical collaborations even more poignantly. The central aim of this drama session (sociodrama 10, February 24, 2021) was to study emotional labor, although this was not made explicit to the participants. Together with my co-researcher Ágnes Blaskó, who co-led the drama session with Krisztina Galgóczi, we operationalized emotional labor through subroles (Meza et al. 2021).[2] Some of the subroles were made explicit by the participants at the beginning of the session, during the warm-up, and some of them—including some of those initially named—were mobilized during the play phase, where music industry scenarios familiar to the participants were enacted. On this occasion, the play phase centered around a female manager navigating and negotiating between an all-male band's ideas about a new release on the one hand, and marketing aspects on the other (thus focusing on a particular manifestation of the art versus commerce tension). During the warm-up, the participants were asked to represent their different subroles activated during their music industry work with the help of three selected prompt objects (the drama took place on Zoom due to the COVID-19 situation, so the participants were asked to look for objects around themselves in their homes). Visualizing subroles in this way revealed the situations or relations in which they were mobilized, as well as their content and relation to one another. The cellist—whose current and previous band both consisted of male members apart from herself—used the following three objects, assuming the following corresponding subroles ("sub-selves"):

- a *diary*: representing planning and organizing, which the participant ultimately named the "class master" role (metaphorically alluding to a school context);
- *glue*: representing the "smoothing out" of conflicts—she calls this a "smoothing out-glue" subrole;
- and a *crêpes pan* ("*palacsintasütő*"): representing the community aspect of the band through shared occasions of frying and eating Hungarian crêpes.

What united all three subroles was their other-orientation, centering of the well-being and healthy functioning of the band as a creative collective, as opposed to individual(istic) self-realization. Regarding the "diary"/"class master" role, the cellist emphasized that it was "usually [her] who pushes agreement on a rehearsal date" (sociodrama 10, February 24, 2021), nudging the other band members to respond. In relation to the "smoothing-out/glue" role, she explained:

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2   In the sociodrama, however, instead of using the term "subroles," the less technical expression "sub-selves" was used to aid comprehension.

> I'm not saying there are many conflicts, but if there is something that needs to be ironed out, that will be me [...]. If there's suspicion of a row arising, or a misunderstanding, or there's a need for a friendly beer or a bad word joke, I'm really good at that ... at easing the tension. (ibid.)

She emphasizes her patience in relation to both the "class master" and the "glue" role: "I think I'm probably more patient than the average." In her former band, this patience was primarily required in relation to the male front singer: "Our frontman was very eccentric [...] even just by looking at him, you can tell. A lovely, funny man, but it's really difficult ... well, you really need patience with him." She narrated how, in a talent contest, a jury member commended the fact that the band worked so well together despite the evident differences between the three members' personalities. The observed balance, according to the cellist, "required great effort to maintain, as it requires a lot of understanding, a lot of patience, and accommodation—and 'glue.'" She made it clear that she felt this effort—ultimately, the distinctive value of the band highlighted by someone in a gatekeeping position—was mainly hers. She also indicated that this effort requires work that can take its toll: "After a while, my 'glue' got really tired and the whole thing just fell apart."

While the three subroles, indicated by the three objects, share an other-orientation, the cellist also emphasized the difference between them. The "glue," she explained, is "the gluing together of existing things"—the management of friction or conflict—whereas the crêpes pan signifies a more constructive, future-oriented "community forming" function, which she identifies as a key to creative processes:

> For creative processes, [community formation] is very important. [...] For me, a music-making, creative process requires those that are involved in that music making to get on well with each other and to be on the same wavelength. Because if there is an argument or some kind of noise [friction], the work does not go that well and people are less enthusiastic about attending rehearsals. (ibid.)

This parallels the previously identified articulated connection between musical collaboration and bonding, or at least resonating, on a personal level, which is the result of deliberate, even planned effort—emotional investment and relational labor, in the form of conscious orientation towards others' needs, which requires the suppression of one's own feelings to fulfill a mediating role in the case of conflict. In both cases discussed where collaboration took place in the form of a regular band, the only woman in the band felt that this emotional and relational labor was performed by her for the rest of the group, enabling the group to function in a creative and operative sense—even though in the first case, this woman was formally in the foreground as band leader, while in

the latter, she was formally in a background—or, more appropriately, founda-
tional—role.

Female musicians' work involves a sense of combined responsibility for their
collaborators' emotional and material needs, and catering to these needs is a nec-
essary basis for creative collaboration. Their frequent articulation of the sense of
responsibility for managing the affairs of their band, for keeping track of issues
and commitments—literally and figuratively, housekeeping—in addition to
managing personal relations, are illustrative of the process of the naturalization
of women's reproductive labor in the patriarchal gender order. In this order, the
social position of the woman is associated with care and the management of rela-
tionships, understood as "women's natural calling" (Praznik 2021, 40). A female
keyboard player, who played in five bands at the time of the time-use interview,
stated that she was responsible for organizing and management tasks in two out
of those five. In the one she talked about in detail, she was one out of two fe-
male members, alongside three male musicians.[3] The process of naturalization
was illustrated by her narrative, where she told us that one of the bands had for-
mal management, but she was "taking care of the affairs of the band" (time-use
interview with a 27-year-old female instrumentalist, November 21, 2019). She
told me that this role emerged automatically, as it became evident that she was
good at such tasks. "When the band started out, I began organizing, [doing] the
technical things, I was the one to get professional assistance" (the last of these
referring to the management). She emphasized that this division of labor was
the result of an "automatic" process since it "fit" her, and even though these tasks
may involve stress and tension at times, she enjoyed doing them.

After the cellist's statement quoted above, one drama leader asked her
whether this meant that she herself was a condition for creation to take place
in the context of the band, to which she replied in confirmation. At the same
time, despite her being an instrumentalist, her articulated subroles conspicuously
missed the embodiment of musical creation. To the drama leader's question
about where the creator or cellist subrole was, she responded:

> I didn't bring it here now, because I didn't consider it that relevant. [...] It's interesting
> how, on what basis one chooses an instrument and then what role it fulfils. [...]
> I think [the cello] suits me, in character as well as ... [since another female drama
> participant] also spoke about subordination, the cello absolutely means a kind of sub-
> ordination, to me at least. Even though the cello can be a solo instrument as well, fun-
> damentally, it is a bass instrument, for instance in an orchestra. It has a foundational
> role, as the majority of bass instruments. We don't really notice it when it's there, but
> if it weren't [there], we'd most probably miss it. And from this perspective—this may

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3   Since the time-use interview concerned the activities of one day, there is no certain information
     on the setup of the other band.

sound stupid, but it is not necessarily musical self-fulfillment that I feel in music-mak-
ing […]—the end result, I don't feel that it is something *I* did, but rather that we did
something collectively—that I'm part of a big unit. But not necessarily because it is
musically self-fulfilling for me. (ibid.)

The drama leader asked the musician to confirm whether what she was asso-
ciating with the cello was the same as what she had shown through the three
subroles, to which she again responded in the affirmative.

The "fit" between professional tasks associated with care for others and the
management of personal relations on the one hand, and womanhood on the
other, is a cultural one (Leonard 2016, 40), as it has been observed in many
studies. What makes the case of the cellist particularly remarkable, however,
is that this "fit" also extends to her musical role—playing the cello, which, as
a foundational, yet still background instrument and sound, is equivalent to the
crucial foundational and supportive, but nevertheless behind-the-scenes role
played by the musician in the band and her subordinate position (including
in the sense that her potential drive for self-expression is subordinated to the
collective work, the "big unit"). In a study on musical learning in informal en-
semble settings in Sweden, Cecilia Ferm Almqvist connects playing styles such
as "jazz licks and technical brilliance" on guitar with a patriarchal order, arguing
that the predominance of such values contributed to female students, who had
been socialized into more "feminine" styles and modes of playing, taking on less
visible roles (Almqvist 2016, para. 26). She argues that this contributes to the
reproduction of an unequal gender order. In a classical music context, Anna Bull
demonstrates how gender is reproduced through the interaction between the
male conductor and female members of the choir, arguing for the "pre-existing
affordances of the privileged male body," which makes it easier for middle- and
upper-class men to inhabit the role of the conductor than others (Bull, 2019,
130; see also Fournet 2010). The example of the cellist implies that this argu-
ment can be extended to the specificities of one's role in a musical group and the
labor performed as part of this role. Yet, based on the examples, womanhood
seems to override the choice of musical instrument or the formal role in the
band: women automatically assumed responsibility for emotional labor even in
more masculine roles such as that of the drummer, or as band leader.

Lastly, although tasks that can be categorized as emotional labor were more
characteristic of the women I interviewed in connection with musical collabo-
rations, some of the male musicians, notably frontmen, also mentioned simi-
lar responsibilities. In a time-use interview, a male producer, for instance, de-
scribed a co-writing session with a female singer, which took place in his home
studio within a timeframe of seven hours, out of which the first sixty minutes
was spent—once again—"tuning in" to one another and "synchronizing prob-
lems"—by which he meant talking about general issues affecting them in their

musical work—and looking for "points of connection" (time-use interview with a male composer and producer, July 2, 2020). This, he emphasized, was especially important for two people normally working on their own. The more they manage to "fuse," the easier communication becomes during the creative process and the less need there is for explaining things. This kind of emotional labor is similar to "creating the right vibe" in the professional space of the recording studio described by Watson and Ward (2013). In this case, however, the producer utilized household infrastructure and resources: his bedroom studio, as well as refreshments purchased by him in the morning, or using the space of his small garden to chat before the session. Here, the setting of emotional and creative labor is more informal, and the labor of the producer-writer merges more directly with the reproductive labor of a host who provides food, drink, and a pleasant and productive space to work in, in his home setting. This reinforces the argument made in the previous chapter regarding housewifization—that household resources provide an overall basis or at least complementation of labor channeled into the music economy. It also highlights that although women, where they are present at all, undoubtedly assume, and are partly forced to, take on a larger division of emotional labor, these resources form an essential part of musical collaborations in general.

Friendship, Gender, and Power in the Music Industries

In his study on relational work in musician careers, George Musgrave (2023) argues for the importance of looking, in particular, at experiences of "mismatches" in expectations and relationship management. In my own study, besides the articulation of the inseparability of friendship and care from regular working relations in music, a different topos, frequently expressed by the interviewed musicians, was an insincerity permeating the society of musicians and music industry workers. This insincerity was typically linked to the imperative to network and to be on good terms with everyone in the industry in expectation of opportunities that may arise out of acquaintances and "friendship." Conversely, engaging in conflict tends to be feared because of its potential resulting in a loss of opportunities and reputation, which are key assets in the cultural industries (Blair 2001; Wing-Fai, Gill, and Randle 2015).

The interviewed musicians often described the atmosphere of immediate, and in a way prescribed, intimacy that characterized the social spaces of music making, typically live music venues, associated with the drinking, chatting, and partying that usually takes place after a gig. One singer characteristically

portrayed this space of socialization among musicians and music industry workers as "an intense environment": "every night is the best night in the world, tonight we're having the biggest party" (interview with a 33-year-old male musician, January 30, 2019). Another musician, at the same time, emphasized the outright insincerity of these seeming friendships, which, to her, masked rivalry, bitterness, and resentment:

> I think this is [the expectation of] not being on bad terms with others. Because who knows when you might play music with them, or when you end up in a situation when you need to help the other person, or when you need help yourself [...]. Your colleagues, people in your profession, come to see your gig, then you sit down to have a beer with them, and after two beers, we're already into discussing the number of abortions [somebody's] girlfriend has had. [...] And you can't say, listen, I'm sick of you because I know what you've said about somebody, or why you play at that venue, or why is it you that gets the role of, say, drummer at [a hugely popular arena-filling] gig. (interview with a 35-year-old female jazz singer, January 22, 2019)

She also directly connected the expectation of maintaining such friendships with the blurring of the boundaries of work and non-work:

> I have never worked at a proper workplace anyway. Where you arrive at eight a.m. and leave at six p.m. Or four p.m.? I don't [even] know! I don't have this [...] clear description of having to answer these twenty emails today. [...] Here, what's part of work is really blurred. (ibid.)

Furthermore, in the interview, the musician clearly articulated and elaborated her precarious working conditions: her struggles to get ahead, to secure (well-)paid and well-attended gigs. The simultaneously perceived necessity of constant networking through acting friendly and engaging in intimate conversations, including unwanted ones, and the necessity of managing resentment, resemble "surface acting" as described by Hochschild (1983). Personal feelings need to be actively managed and suppressed according to the specific "feeling rules" (Hochschild 1983, 56–75) of the music industry social space. In the cited study, Musgrave (2023, 6) emphasizes that whether someone is a friend or colleague is often unclear to musicians, especially since during careers, "friends can be or become professional colleagues," and "this relationship can take place in the other direction too where professional colleagues come to be thought of as friends, or akin to family whom a musician might describe as 'loving'" (7). Musgrave emphasizes, however, that once a professional relationship is over, this can be felt as a loss—at times a profound one: "for an R&B singer from London," he explains, "the realization that a number of relationships she had defined as deeply intimate—like family—were painfully seen to, in fact, have been more instrumental

and marketized than she had thought" (ibid.). In the case of surface acting, as in the case of the Hungarian jazz singer quoted above, such loss may be less typical, since the insincerity is felt already during the acting of friendliness. Nevertheless, the perceived necessity of engaging in these insincere friendly interactions may equally become a source of estrangement (Hochschild 1983, 37).

The gender aspects of navigating networking were also evident. Some female musicians noted that friendliness was more difficult to perform for them in typical spaces of networking, such as pubs, night clubs, and festivals, as they felt that this was, firstly, inseparable from being sexually available, which could both result in having to manage uncomfortable situations, in addition to drawing negative judgement by colleagues. As a focus group participant, a female technician put it: "You know, they're trying to guess what's going on with who. I'm very likely to have been with a lot more men in my life in theory than in reality" (focus group 4, October 22, 2020). Secondly, it also involved practices, in particular drinking alcohol, that could similarly result in negative judgement and "gossiping" destructive to the woman's reputation in her work environment. As a female instrumentalist observed in the final, integration phase[4] of a drama session:

> Being mates[5] is very difficult I think. Musical deals and becoming mates in music,[6] where people become acquainted, usually happen late in the evening alongside a beer. And very quickly, if one has beers with men late in the evening as a woman, that usually carries a different message. (sociodrama 10, February 24, 2021)

To this, the other female participant, a manager and record label employee, immediately responded: "this is very true" (ibid.).

On the one hand, being "nice" is a norm for women, yet it also carries the threat of unwanted male attention they additionally have to manage. Many women talked about the strategies they employed to avoid looking available in informal spaces of music:

> As a woman, you need to manage these situations and have methods for dealing with men making advances, that is almost compulsory. [...] being kind is the worst thing that you can do. I'm sorry, I know this sounds bad ... as this also creates a kind of split in my personality, I'm actually a much nicer and friendlier person than this. (interview with a 33-year-old female musician, April 11, 2019)

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4   For an explanation of the three main phases of a sociodrama session, see my introductory chapter.
5   In the Hungarian original, the terms "haverkodni" or "haverkodás" was used. "Haver"—mate or buddy–indicates a friend that is not particularly close, although more than a mere acquaintance. It is also often specifically used in the context of informal networking. Thus, the distance from "real" friendship was made evident by speakers when they used this term, which underlines the surface nature of acting friendly in the social situations in question.
6   "Zenei haverkodás" in the original.

For this instrumentalist, emotional labor therefore included working on herself in order to avoid male sexual attention.

For a female singer who expressed her fear of being talked about behind her back, acting unfriendly—and thus going against the patriarchal norm linking femininity with being friendly and always approachable—became part of a strategy to avoid gossip. She described how a male instrumentalist who occasionally played in her band had told her that he found her very reserved and stern, and was not sure where he stood with her.

> I told him, listen, they talk so much behind my back, and I have listened so many times to how [a famous Hungarian female singer] was being talked about behind her back in the band that now I'm really afraid of letting [musician colleagues] close to me. I'm really scared of what you will say … like, the "diva," and what [I am] like with money, I don't know. (interview with a 31-year-old singer-songwriter, June 6, 2018)

Through referencing a well-known female singer and songwriter, the musician linked her fear to her gender and to her front role in a male-dominated industry where she receives more attention than her male counterparts. In an industry where reputation is a key resource, and one that is particularly vulnerable in the case of women (Berkers and Schaap 2014, 18), this fear is unsurprising. Making friends and being nice, a general demand from those working in music, rather than just a way to get ahead, potentially also poses danger for women. This makes it more complicated for them to navigate the scene, and requires additional emotional labor.

Specifically, the masculine atmosphere of "hitting on girls" characterizing spaces of music—a practice that was named thus by several male musicians—has particular consequences for female workers working in this environment. This behavior has to be tolerated not only by female musicians, but also managers, among whom there are an increasing number of women, many of them in their twenties or early thirties, making them frequent targets of unwanted male attention. Responding "well" to flirtation while maintaining a professional attitude is thus also a crucial part of female music industry workers' emotional labor. A male musician talked about the masculine atmosphere of the live music sphere with reference to the experiences of his manager sister:

> My sister, who is in management, [regularly encounters] these respected older musicians in the profession. [...] I've heard [them say] things [to her] like, what a pretty little girl [...]. After gigs, it is all about drinking together, and you have this little flirting going on, this kind of hitting on the girls, this kind of banter, and in order to sell your band, you have to tolerate this verbal teasing, which everyone knows exists. (interview with a 36-year-old male singer-songwriter, April 12, 2018)

Exploring the emotional labor involved in working in a professional recording studio, Watson and Ward (2013) name "tolerance" as something that needs to be performed by sound engineers in relation to the behavior of clients, which at times can be abusive. "The nonreaction to this kind of abuse," the authors observe, "maybe [sic] in and of itself a performance of 'emotional neutrality'" (Watson and Ward 2013, 2913). Echoing Hochschild's study, where she cited joking as one coping mechanism with emotional labor on the part of flight attendants (Hochschild 1983, 197), humor was another strategy—even an expected one—by which women dealt with such male behavior: "You can only react with humor to this [constantly being the subject of sexual gossip as a woman], because otherwise you destroy your soul [and] your brain," said a female technician (focus group 4, October 22, 2020). In Watson and Ward's research, this performance is embedded into a formal client–service provider relationship, whereas in the present case, the spaces of networking are informally organized. The fuzziness of boundaries so frequently mentioned by the workers arguably further complicates emotional labor in this kind of environment. Moreover, in Watson and Ward's study, probably since all engineers and producers were male, patriarchal power relations are not highlighted. The examples shown above demonstrate that through their "tolerance"—the emotional neutrality women perform by tolerating men's objectification—they unwillingly contribute towards the solidifying of their subordinated status in the music industries.

Managing Work and Friendship: The Amateur Helper

The negotiation of friendship assumes direct economic significance in relation to a group of workers I call here amateur helpers.[7] Amateur helpers may include musicians' friends, relatives or romantic partners, as well as fans who contribute mostly unpaid labor, and at times material resources, to the advancement of a solo artist or band. One prominent type of unpaid amateur labor is female partners acting as informal managers—working without a contract—to their male musician partners, discussed in the previous chapter. In other cases, friendship and fandom—of music in general or specifically the band or musician—as well as the combination of the two, may also be a basis for the performance of such unpaid work. Focusing on this group of workers helps us to explore the emotional labor of negotiating the boundaries between (paid) work and (unpaid) assistance, and at the same time, friendship or family/intimate ties and

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7   I thank my co-researcher Ágnes Blaskó for coming up with this term.

professional/working relationships. In other words, in this section, I explore the labor involved in managing the informal resources—partly, but not entirely embedded in the household—that I outlined in the previous chapter.

In her analysis on the informality of creative work, Alacovska reflects on "voluntary work" as the most common form of community-based non-monetary exchange in the creative labor contexts she observes, namely actors, musicians, new media workers, and fashion designers in (North) Macedonia and Albania. Yet, the examples mentioned in her study are charity gigs by musicians that represent "a moral obligation and reciprocal action" (Alacovska 2018, 19). Such work is still visible to the public, as opposed to the behind-the-scenes contributions of amateur helpers. According to a musician who herself was managed by a friend in the first phase of her career, making use of the labor of amateur helpers is a very common practice in music (interview with a 31-year-old female singer-songwriter, June 7, 2018). The contributions of amateur helpers were, moreover, typically mentioned by musicians at earlier stages of their careers, indicating that such free labor is often necessary for a musician in the initial years, and that later, the musician might have more financial resources to pay professional behind-the-scenes workers, or, in less fortunate cases, a reliance on altruistic free labor becomes unsustainable. The decreasing necessity of amateur help was explained by an artist, with already significant success behind her at the time of the interview, in the following way:

> I think this is very typical at the beginning, but then it fades out. This is probably logical, partly because tasks increase and the volume gets bigger than what could be done just out of courtesy, and partly because professionalism becomes increasingly important. You can only expect this if you pay a person so that you have a basis for your expectation. (interview with a 36-year-old female singer, January 10, 2019)

This statement connects the professional knowledge necessary for sustaining and managing more advanced musical careers with a paid service. In other accounts, too, the main frictions—"mismatches" (Musgrave 2023)—were around remuneration or the lack of, professionalism or the lack of, and the personal relationship between the musician and the helper. In an illustrative case, a singer and songwriter whom a friend managed at the beginning of her solo career described the helper's tasks in the following way:

> In theory, she was my manager, but in reality, she behaved like my assistant or something like that. I told her to have a look at this and write to that person, and I didn't [have to] confront people; she did. At the same time, I watched everything she did, how she did it, and corrected her. Well, we did it together really. This is how I tend to put it in retrospect. (interview with a 31-year-old female singer-songwriter, June 7, 2018)

In this case, the amateur manager exerted significant emotional labor by essentially acting as a buffer between the artist on the one hand, and promoters and other industry actors on the other. From the musician's perspective, the manager had responsibilities, but these were also unclear. The musician viewed the helper's motivation as being rooted in the benefits provided by the music (or cultural) industries as a work environment, with its associated "coolness" or "glamour" (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011, 124–27):

> I think this whole art world really appealed to her, and she was really happy to be part of it. So, she enjoyed being involved in this, she came along with us to places and enjoyed the buzz.
>
> *- So, the benefit to her was that she could be a part of something?*
>
> Yes, and that she could join us and gain an insider view.
> (ibid.)

This statement needs to be interpreted as one made from the artist's standpoint, which means the reference to immaterial returns partly functions as the artist's justification for not paying the helper. This does not deny, from the standpoint of the helper, a presumed symbolic motivation behind her labor. At the same time, the presumption of this symbolic motivation may also be linked to a dominant cultural construction of music fandom as feminine, the adoration of performing musicians as more typically characteristic of women—especially young women, "girls"—than men (whereas men are more typically "connoisseurs," such as record collectors) (Straw 1997; Anderson 2012, 240; Whiteley 2000). This association adds another basis for the naturalization of the manager's labor. Moreover, the musician also clearly indicated that there was, at least temporarily, a conflict arising between them. The musician explained that she remained unable to pay the helper, yet at a certain point in her career, she also began to expect more than the helper could perform. "Because I was also involved [in the work] anyway, we decided that in order to preserve our friendship, we would [terminate our working relationship]" (ibid.). Despite a willingness to maintain the friendship, this decision was followed by an (at least temporary) period of mutual resentment. Thus, it seemed that the fragility of the professional relationship relying on unpaid service indeed harmed the parties' personal relationship. "It is not that I was ungrateful, but indeed, this was a strange situation," commented the artist (ibid.). With regard to the informal transactions in the creative labor contexts she studies, Alacovska observes a reverse relationship between personal or social closeness and economic remuneration: "The more intimate and closer the relationship, the less the economic benefit. The more spatially and socially distant the relationship, the greater the pecuniary motivation" (Alacovska 2018, 21). Yet, interestingly, the basis of the artist's justification of her non-payment

was not their closeness, rather the benefits of the work environment, implicitly implying that the glamour associated with the "music industry"—even at the relatively low level that the musician's career was at—should be regarded as sufficient payment. This implied norm undoubtedly contributes to the toleration of insecure, precarious work in the cultural industries.

Although in the case above, the amateur helper failed to convert her status into a professional and paid music job, in other instances, being an unpaid amateur helper was regarded as a phase—even if a lengthy one—in the route towards professionalization, as a kind of informal and self-appointed internship. A female manager described such a route, which involved the simultaneous unpaid management of three bands while finishing a music management degree (she did receive a percentage on bookings, which was a separate function). Unlike in the previous case, however, the basis of her free labor was not friendship. Instead, she justified not asking for money by saying that she had not yet acquired her management degree—even though the majority of managers worked in the industry without a certificate (since the two existing Hungarian music management schools had only operated for the past decade).

> I didn't and still don't ask (for) money for managing them, because for me this is still just practice. I have been with these bands for almost two years now, and if I should get a new project or a new band, I would now have the courage to ask for money. And [my existing bands] are also very willing to give me money [from now on]. And this is really an honor, [the fact] that they have decided this themselves, like, "we are satisfied with you, and now we can give you money for your help." I mean, I could also have asked sooner, but I always looked upon this as a school. (interview with a 24-year-old female manager, April 5, 2020)

The negotiation of the manager's "intern" or "professional" status relied on her band members' willingness, satisfaction with, and appreciation of, her work of two years. It was this appreciation, together with the two years' worth of work experience, that granted her the courage to do paid work with a potential new band. In contrast to the reverse relationship between closeness and economic benefit described by Alacovska, in this case, the implication in terms of moral economy is that a paid professional status must be earned by trust and free labor and accepted with gratitude. What nevertheless connects the two unpaid managers—both of them women—is the lack of recognition of their labor as work, indicating the cheapness and naturalization of (female) labor in the music economy.

In a third case, a male artist linked the payment of amateur labor towards the career of his band to a certain career phase, measurable in economic status and projected in the future. The musician referred to the indispensable, although unpaid, contribution of not only friends from his locality (which is distinct from Budapest, where he had moved to pursue his career), but also family:

 [A band member's] dad, he helps us with everything, for example, drives us around ... [we have a group of] about 9–10 [helpers].

- Those people who helped a lot at the beginning, are they friends or ...?

They are friends. Many of my friends from [my home region] helped me at the beginning.

- And are these connections still active?

They are. We have actually decided that if [our band] manages to make it to the extent that we can charge one million forints [for a gig], which means [...] you are regarded as an act who has made it, since you're able to make a living out of [music], then we'd like everyone to have a share of this. So that it becomes a thing where those who help us for free now would get something in return at some point.

(interview with a 27-year-old male musician, August 6, 2020)

Charging a fee of one million forints (approx. 2575 euros) or more per gig was only possible for a small number of top artists in Hungary. The conditions given by the artist for paying their helpers were, therefore, fairly strict and uncertain (in fact, at the time of writing, the band is no longer active, and they never achieved that status). However, the point to be made here is not that these artists were particularly uncharitable and, indeed, selfish, nor that the managers or other behind-the-scenes amateur workers necessarily undervalued themselves. Instead, the case confirms, once again, that in the same way in which informal unpaid labor is necessary for the maintaining of the system of global capitalism, the contribution of the unpaid and informal labor of the amateur helpers is a structural feature of the music industries—as Alacovska also concludes in a semiperipheral context: "informality [...] is also central to the very preservation of sustainable and meaningful creative careers, in spite of the profound precarity—insecurity and casualization—of work in creative industries" (Alacovska 2018, 3). Several authors have already pointed out that artists often sacrifice years' worth of investment of time and labor with the hope of establishing careers (which may ultimately never happen), and that this is a constitutive aspect of the cultural industries—Duffy (2016) refers to this "investment" work as "aspirational labor" and Kuehn and Corrigan (2013) as "hope labor." The examples above show that such labor is performed not only by artists, but also less visible workers in the music industries, many of them women.

Social Media, Emotional Labor, and Genre

Communication towards and with a public audience constitutes a major component of most musicians' work. This communication partly takes place through the art itself—the music and any artwork surrounding or accompanying it, whether album graphics, music videos or live visuals—and any promotional material circulated along with it. In addition, it also takes place through direct, one-to-one, or one-to-many communication with listeners. At live events, the bar or the merchandise desk functions as a social space where fans and friends can meet the artist. However, online media provide a possibly equally, or even more, important space for such encounters. During the time of the COVID-19 restrictions, online platforms remained, for a significant length of time, the only communal spaces where musicians and listeners could engage in direct interaction. As it has been widely documented (e.g., Agamennone, Palma, and Sarno 2023), many musicians set up live streaming infrastructure in their homes to enable live gigs—typically acoustic, but also, for instance, DJ sets—which often involved artists chatting to their listeners using the live chat functions of YouTube or Facebook. This also became common practice in Hungary during the first lockdown period—the spring of 2020—in the case of the Maradj Otthon! Fesztivál ("Stay at Home Festival"), a practice supported by the government (alongside various other sponsors) and entwined with the political campaign urging citizens to stay at home. As the corporate sponsorship implies, in an overall majority of cases, the performing musicians did not ask for a fee or even donations—the shows were overall regarded as a way for musicians to continue playing to an audience, to provide some entertainment and perhaps comfort to the public during the time of a crisis; and even, in the case of the festival, acting, willingly or unwittingly, as mouthpieces for the government, in line with the dominant "strategic apoliticism."

In one typical case, a pop singer, who gained fame via television talent shows, played an hour-long live acoustic set for an online audience that shifted between 200 and 250. The show was organized independently (not part of the virtual festival), and took place on a Saturday as the third instalment of a weekly series. The musician streamed the show from his bedroom (with part of the bed visible), which already created an intimate atmosphere—the literal "bedroom" aesthetic (Galloway 2020; Desai-Stephens 2022) important to much YouTube-based music content. In each pause between two songs, as well as at the beginning and end of the set, he talked to his audience: he read out comments and responded to them, including compliments, which he thanked individually; he greeted people and talked about the songs, as well as about the conditions of his "home office"—joking that the neighbors had not complained yet. He smiled and joked throughout, asked where everyone was checking in from, made sure

to greet people from his own town and geographical region, and said hello to a musician friend whose name he recognized. At one point, he was handed a piece of apple pie by somebody (invisible on the screen), which prompted members of the audience to start sharing what they had baked or were planning to. This further reinforced the home-like, cozy setting—which could nevertheless also support a party atmosphere: during the second half of the show, members of the audience shifted towards sharing what (alcoholic drinks) they were drinking, and the musician himself had a glass of vodka-orange juice cocktail. Towards the end, the tech guy aiding the performance from behind the scenes was also introduced. Instead of exuding a sterile professionality, the musician thus opted to publicly acknowledge and make visible this behind-the-scenes work, which had particular significance during the period of crisis that was unfolding just at the time that the gig took place. As explained in chapter 2, behind-the-scenes music industry workers, such as technicians, received no compensation from the state for their loss of livelihood for a long time. Among the long string of comments from the audience, only one had a negative message, the rest were all supportive of the artist, friendly, and communal towards one another.

Inextricable from the musical performance were the friendly smiles offered in abundance, the attention paid to individual viewers and their specific messages, making the effort to read their messages aloud, and comforting his public during a difficult time with his musical performance; all of this offered free for anyone interested. This can be considered emotional labor, a specific type Baym (2015) refers to as the relational labor of connection, since it contributes to the process of performing and maintaining a consistent artist persona; while also actively contributing to sustaining the engagement of the audience; to keep them watching. There is, however, no monetary compensation to the artist, at least not directly.[8] Seamlessly weaved into this friendly, even intimate communication is encouragement of listeners-viewers to subscribe to the YouTube channel, to follow the artist's profile on Facebook and Instagram, and to check in the following week too.

As we have already seen in chapter 3, digital media platforms have profoundly shaped the boundaries between public and private: the above example poignantly demonstrates that the domestic space is not insulated from public spaces. Although a conceptual distinction may be drawn between (mainly) content-based streaming platforms such as Spotify or YouTube and social media platforms (or, as they were often referred to in earlier times, social networking sites; boyd and Ellison 2007), YouTube and Instagram in particular combine content sharing with a "community" function by encouraging, through their

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8   The profit that is made is made by the platform company, Meta, and advertisers. However, I do not argue for extending the notion of emotional labor to all affective engagement on a digital platform, as this would render the concept practically meaningless.

platform architecture, activity in the "comments section." The musicians' attitudes towards, and practices of, communicating via social media is partly structured by genre. First, I return to the broadly defined hip hop world, which can be characterized by the emotional labor of seamless and direct connection, an active blurring of boundaries between public and private, where, at the same time, business concerns and relations that permeate the public sphere are not necessarily obscured. Then, in the final section, I look at the pop-rock world, where musicians attempt to exert control and emotional labor with the purpose of drawing boundaries—struggling against the demands of digital platforms, but also trying to make effective use of them from an audience building perspective.

In the Hungarian hip hop music world, where the primary online spaces, as we have seen, were YouTube and Instagram at the time of the research, communication in the public sphere with fans and among fellow artists is intense and direct. This is arguably related to the ethos of hip hop, where authenticity—"keepin' it real" (e.g., Reitsamer and Prokop 2018) is both positional, as Taylor (1997, 22–23) defines it, meaning that it hinges on the articulation of one's (subaltern) social position, and biographical or personal. A close connection between the artists' personal lives and feelings on the one hand, and the creative product on the other is thus often articulated and enacted by the artist as well as members of the audience, and via interactions between them, on social media. Even though artists may prioritize friendship and personal connections in their narrative, a sense of authenticity that is thus constantly being performed is an essential part of meaning making in this genre. The performance of authenticity is emotional labor itself, done via digital media: Instagram stories (photos with tags and visual effects, short videos, promotional messages) created with at least daily frequency, constant responding to private messages, or doing "lives"— that is, checking in via Instagram live streams. In chapter 3, I showed that being on social media with the help of their smartphones takes up a huge proportion of hip hop musicians' daily activities.

Upon their release, songs and the accompanying videos are actively discussed in comments on YouTube, Instagram, and, to a lesser extent, Facebook, along with the artists' personal life events, personal relationships, and assumed motivations behind writing a particular song or particular words. In the case of a musician who publicly dated another well-known artist, with both of them regularly posting about the ups and downs of their relationship, the following examples illustrate the types of comments that can be found in abundance below the artist's song videos on YouTube:

"One can really feel what the two of you have gone through"

"That pain that one can feel or hear, [it is clear] that it's not just a bunch of lyrics but your own lived story and mental suffering. You need to hold on!"

"This is music you bend double listening to, because you don't want to feel the pain ... It conveys so much feeling, your heart and soul is in it. Hang in there! 😌 ✨ 🤍"

Besides articulating the felt unity between the artist's feelings, personal life, and their songs, such comments are often formulated in a personal manner, addressed to the artists with the assumption that they are reading the comments. Many artists, in fact, do respond to comments, at times on YouTube, but in particular on Instagram. For instance, in my observation, it was typical for female artists in this music world to thank fans for complimenting their looks, the particular outfit worn in a video or in a promo shoot, and so forth. The comments, however, could also turn hostile; and hostility also needs to be managed. Hostile or simply unwanted comments on female artists' looks, as already observed in other studies, are practically inevitable. Quoting Tami Gadir, Caroline Ann O'Sullivan (2018, 112), for instance, observes that the "negotiation of [female musicians'] appearance and desirability" (Gadir 2016, 5) was unavoidable for the female indie and dance musicians in Dublin who she interviewed. Due to online comments and reviews that tend to place their appearance before their music, she observes, these women "can also feel under a lot of pressure by the constant focus on their appearance and the negativity, so much so that they often feel like giving up" (O'Sullivan 2018, 113). Yet, the female musician mentioned above also spoke about such unwanted criticism aimed at her private life:

> And when these songs came out, since [the audience] knew who they were about [...], they attacked me on the basis that I want to profit from him. [...] It is difficult either way, because I expose myself personally to attack by putting my own feelings, my own thoughts into words. I become really vulnerable before them because they don't know my feelings, but they argue with how I behaved with the other person. (interview with a female trap/pop singer and songwriter, October 22, 2020)

This shows that the atmosphere of intimacy mutually created by the musician and her fans, listeners, or followers on social media has two sides: it may simultaneously strengthen the latter's attachment to the former, while also rendering the musician vulnerable to unwanted personal advice or criticism.

It appears that the smaller the distance performed between the artist and the creative product (song and, most often, video), the more openly heteronomous (Bourdieu [1992] 1995, 218) the creation is in terms of following the perceived demands of the market. Hip hop musicians' reliance on corporate sponsors is evident from the over-abundance of sponsored content—clothes, perfumes, beauty salons, hospitality facilities, and so on—in Instagram feeds. This kind of content, however, is not separated from visual depictions of the artists' home environments, at times their personal relationships (e.g., photos with their romantic partners). This way, the depicted domestic spaces become simultaneously

commercialized and digitalized spaces into which the audience is invited, while the emotional labor of connection performed through digital platforms by these artists day and night, almost non-stop, produces value for platform companies. In her analysis of relational work performed in the digital sphere, Baym describes cellist Zoe Keating's strategy in the following way: the "social is an easy extension of her everyday practice, but is also strategically tied to making music a financially feasible career choice"; she "considers her 'inside voice' and her 'outside voice' the same" (Baym 2015, 19)—much like Hungarian hip hop artists. However, there is one difference: although in the case described by Baym, "relational labour" entails "a willingness and ability to present and sell yourself as something of value, all the while appearing to be socializing rather than brazenly self-promoting" (19), in the presented case, the goal of (self-)promotion is not obscured at all. Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, the "acting" is "deep" in the Hochschildian sense, while digital capitalism operates seamlessly. Returning to the female trap/pop musician, for her, her feelings and intimate relationships are directly expressed in her art, which generate authentic feelings in her audience and a connection between her and them. Nevertheless, she is also very aware that her online communication is work, hard, and time-consuming.

> I think a lot of people don't know that this really is work. And I don't even post in a very professional way. My life does not consist of constantly looking around to see how I could pose, nor is my Insta[gram] feed white and pink. Mine is more relaxed. But it is still grueling. (interview with a female trap/pop singer and songwriter, October 22, 2020)

In line with the relative heteronomy of this music world, this attitude may be characterized as a kind of "capitalist realism" (Fisher 2009): an acceptance of the profit logic through which the digitalized, platformized recording industry operates, while at the same time looking for, finding, as well as actively creating what feels like moments of authenticity through music and communication.

In contrast, pop-rock musicians emphasized their deliberate effort of distancing themselves from the demands of social media platforms, and attempted to control their use. They often emphasized the threat of negative online comments. For example, a female musician made a clear connection between negative online feedback and self-doubt as an artist: "You must have a very strong self-image, a very strong shell if you are unfamiliar with uncertainty, partly because of feedback; we are so susceptible to critique, especially today in the world of comments [on social media]" (interview with a 36-year-old female singer, January 10, 2019). Another, male singer and songwriter, when asked how he felt about online feedback, including the number of likes, he answered, "Oh, that's very hard, you mustn't read YouTube" (interview with a 33-year-old male musician, January 30, 2019). The attitude of distancing, however, was not only based

on such negative experience. A male musician expressed a certain level of control over the kind of usage he was willing to engage in:

> As for me, if I like somebody's music, I really don't care how they live or what they are doing. Regardless, sometimes I write comments that are really funny. And I'm really at home with Instagram story, you can do all sorts of silly stuff, but I won't produce a live [stream] about how I'm backstage at the moment, so I don't use social media the way the young generation does and the way they expect this from an artist. (interview with a 30-year-old male singer-songwriter, January 23, 2019)

Another male musician similarly emphasized control, even if this felt weaker in his case:

> Sometimes it's a nuisance, because it is an expectation towards us, [although] I've become more and more my own boss, so [this is] less [the case] now, because I have my own expectations towards myself, but there are moments of course when I don't feel like posting at all and I'm really not in the mood of sharing a photo of myself just for the sake of it, so there are of course days that I miss because I'm not in the mood of thinking about it, and I have other things to do. (interview with a 39-year-old male pop singer, March 27, 2020)

Lastly, in stark contrast to the hip hop artists in the previous section, a female singer and songwriter is clear about distinguishing between what is free to share and what is to be kept private: "Where do you I draw the boundary? I don't post about who I'm in a relationship with or how that is" (interview with a 31-year-old female musician, June 6, 2018).

In genres other than hiphop(ified pop), musicians also invest significant emotional labor into separating work from private life. The emotional labor of managing professional collaboration between romantic partners is described in the following way by a female drummer who plays in pop and rock bands, and whose partner is also a musician:

> For one and a half years, I was really protesting against mixing work [with intimacy], but you have to be grown-up about this, you have to program your brain that it can indeed work. But when we have a rehearsal, we do not take the professional personally. If he says, look, play something else, or I say, listen, you were really out of tune here, so do something about it, then we don't take that personally, we are conscious about it. And of course, sometimes this requires a discussion at home, that this wasn't about you, it was about your music. It's not easy, it's really not easy, but I think if you make this clear in yourself, then it is a road you can walk. (interview with a 28-year-old female drummer, July 9, 2020)

The issue of separating private life from work also arises in terms of displaying professionalism in a live performance context. A singer who had been performing for fifteen years with her partner was really straightforward and strict about

not mixing the two: "I have never taken my private life to the stage. That, to me, is an entirely different sphere. If I have a problem with [my partner], you don't see that on stage. That has no place there" (interview with a 39-year-old female musician, July 10, 2020). Implicit to this separation is an attempt to emphasize the division made between creative labor—in this case, performance—from the creative workers' private lives, and between their working relationship and their private one. This symbolic attempt may be related to the particular genre world in which they perform, namely (mainstream) pop considered as professional entertainment (the kind of pop that, while contemporary in instrumentation, can be considered as the legacy of the *táncdal* [dance song] or *estrada* music of the socialist era), where the stage clearly marks a boundary between the performer and the audience, and a space of work for the entertainer: "It's nobody's business. That is a different sphere, a stage. A stage where you perform!"—the singer adds. This attitude can be contrasted to the "first person authenticity" (Moore 2002) paradigm of rock music, where "honesty (truth to cultural experience) becomes the validating criterion of musical value" (Middleton 1990, 127); where "an originator (composer, performer) succeeds in conveying the impression that his/her utterance is one of integrity/that it represents an attempt to communicate in an unmediated form with the audience" (Moore 2002, 214). In the case of pop as entertainment music, no such claim is made.

Comparing this example to the articulation of closeness central to the hiphopified pop world suggests that the dimension of autonomy versus heteronomy is not sufficiently explanatory in itself. Both worlds can be considered as heteronomous in the sense that the labor aspect of musicians' activities are not invisible to the musicians themselves. Yet, in the more directly platform-based hip hop world, the emotional labor of displaying and managing one's private life, relationships, and spaces as organically connected to their music, in fact as inseparable from their creative output on social media platforms—from the perspective of the platform, all is "content." In contrast, in the live music-based pop entertainment world, the performer's private life remains behind the scenes, and emotional labor is aimed at maintaining the boundaries between the two.

CHAPTER 6

Labor, Crisis, and Solidarity

In this final chapter, I reflect on some of the opportunities that opened up during the crisis period starting from 2020, and more specifically on the particularities of Hungarian popular music emerging from its embeddedness in those historical national- and global-level processes and power structures that have hindered the development of solidarity among workers in music, and between these workers and others. I conclude with suggestions for overcoming some of these obstacles through thinking about solidarity in a structural, and autonomy in a collective, "relational" way (Millar 2014; Ivancheva and Keating 2020).

Yielding Place to the New and an "Older" Order[1]

The analysis presented in this book has indicated the emergence of a distinct labor process in musical work, which demonstrates a structural homology with the genre conventions of (digitalized) hip hop, particularly network-based collaboration and the core of the composition and recording process. The latter is based on "beatmaking," typically requiring no more than a laptop and some hard- and software, writing lyrics and rapping or singing them. This musical labor process is new in some respects, but also demonstrates similarities and continuities with work in the dominant pop-rock world. The two labor process-based music worlds are to be understood as ideal types without strict boundaries in reality—for instance, the elite of the hip hop world is integrated into the star system and is invited to the biggest music festivals; on the other hand, many rock bands and pop acts, or their management companies on behalf of them, are also constantly looking for corporate sponsors. At the time of writing this concluding chapter, singer, songwriter, and former YouTube "vlogger" (video blogger) Azahriah, who frequently collaborates with rapper DESH and well-known producers from the hip hop world, is a few weeks from playing a triple gig at Hungary's biggest venue that enables the hosting of live music events

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[1] A paraphrase of Richard Hoggart (1957)

(although previously it had only served as such on rare occasions, for international superstars such as Red Hot Chili Peppers), the Puskás Arena (opened in 2019 and holding over 67 thousand people)—all three events were immediately sold-out. This is an unprecedented achievement for a popular musician in Hungary. Azahriah was unknown as a musician before COVID-19, yet he had become a relatively popular "content producer" on YouTube, building up an audience as a vlogger. During the pandemic, he and his team were able to capitalize on this audience and his experience in YouTube-based content optimization in order to establish a following at a fast pace. Moreover, he is not alone—musicians and music industry workers agree that a "new generation" of artists, mostly hip hop, has emerged in the wake of the pandemic and significantly shifted music consumption patterns (Barna, forthcoming).[2]

Azahriah's fast-paced career towards stardom, while evidencing the new labor process, is also an example of making the "best of both worlds:" old gatekeepers are partly tapping into the newly emergent pool of musicians, while these musicians are less reliant on, or almost independent from, state infrastructure and support. The entrepreneurialism of musicians, producers, and label owners in the hip hop world parallels the entrepreneurialism of pop-rock musicians. In the latter case, this entrepreneurship is partly state-supported (through infrastructure and financing), and partly functioning as an escape route from the informal hierarchies of the "music industry." What is new is how this entrepreneurialism is increasingly controlled and standardized, even Taylorized, by digital media platforms and the logic of their algorithms. Digital, partly or primarily home-based entrepreneurialism is evidently reinforcing a sense of competition, the permeation of the logic of creative collaboration—otherwise deeply entwined with friendship and communities based on cultural affiliation and subcultural commitment—with the drive towards increasing numbers, thus particular forms of heteronomy. At the same time, adherence to this mode of work and generating income lends at least some autonomy from political incorporation.

In both worlds, intermediaries such as (partly local or locally embedded) digital distributors aid the process of platform-based entrepreneurship, and it also helps record labels to outsource various tasks to musicians that they had fulfilled before the early twenty-first-century crisis of the recording industry (labels in Hungary today increasingly, perhaps even predominantly function as management and booking agencies). Furthermore, what also connects musical

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[2]   With regard to music streaming, a clear shift can be observed in the international versus local character of music consumption, shifting towards local music. When MAHASZ first released digital sales charts in 2014, the number of Hungarian artists on these was very small. Today, international music typically hardly reaches 10% in the digital Top 40 (c.f. Tófalvy et al. 2023), although it still dominates the lower positions.

entrepreneurship across genre worlds is the utilization of household resources and a reliance on informal labor, the boundaries between personal and professional relations managed through emotional labor. This reliance on the household for resources and labor in music careers—an aspect missed by accounts based in the global core (with the exception, perhaps, of Musgrave [2023])—continues a history of family enterprise based in Eastern European semiproletarian households. It is perhaps no coincidence that in the case of six out of the thirty-five musicians and music industry workers with whom I conducted semi-structured interviews between 2018–2020, both parents were entrepreneurs. The time when their businesses typically thrived was in the 1980s, in the period preceding the regime change and Hungary's reintegration into the capitalist world-system, and the intensification of "spontaneous privatization," "informal deregulation" (1987–1990) (Éber et al. 2014, 28), and a booming second economy, already partly open towards the West. In the narratives of these six musicians, the experience of transgenerational family histories in postsocialist semiperipheral conditions is palpable: the thriving of small family businesses during this era and up until the end of the 1990s, along with the increasing economic pressure towards the 2000s, was when many of the businesses went bankrupt because of "the *multi*s" (multinational retailers). I quote each of these musicians to demonstrate the similarities between the narratives:

> A normal family background, my mom is an entrepreneur, my dad is also an entrepreneur. (interview with a 34-year-old male DJ, producer and educator, March 23, 2020)

> They were both entrepreneurs, my dad partly still is. Back then, in the eighties, my mom's business was a souvenir shop that did really well, and a toy shop [...], and my dad managed a carpentry and glazing business. (interview with a 39-year-old male pop singer, March 27, 2020)

> We used to have a small shop. My dad and my mom were both in commerce, there was a small family business. But then, many years ago, it had to close, because we lived in the outskirts of the city [...] and so, when the *multi*[national companie]s arrived, that was it for the family business. (interview with a 24-year-old female singer, manager, and record label employee, April 5, 2020)

> Basically we were an entrepreneur family for quite a few decades. [...] My grandmother's family had a shop on the pedestrian street of a [small town that is also a holiday destination], and when after the regime change, Austrians, Germans, et cetera, who were mildly well-off, who didn't go to the West on holiday, but rather here, to the East, they bought all kinds of shit they didn't need, [on the basis of] "we'll take a look at this country and we can spend our money." It was then that we [opened] a souvenir shop in the pedestrian street in [the mentioned town], which is the most popular place, because Lake Balaton is there and [another holiday resort] close. [...] Then the shop went bankrupt, we had to rent it out. (interview with a 31-year-old male film music composer, July 3, 2020)

> My parents are entrepreneurs. For this reason, what I learnt from a young age was that nothing happens if you don't make an effort. (interview with a 28-year-old female drummer, July 9, 2020)

> My mom is a real trouser-wearing woman: an entrepreneur. A real survivor.[3] My dad is also a bit like that. (interview with a female trap/pop singer and songwriter, October 22, 2020)

The last two quotations also indicate the attribution of an entrepreneurial set of attitudes: doing it yourself, assuming responsibility, surviving. Lastly, small entrepreneurship or sole tradership was also encouraged by the Fidesz governments in the post-2010 era, particularly through the mentioned simplified KATA tax scheme—at least until the COVID-19 period, when self-employed workers, with the exception of minimal aid through the tax scheme, were left to cope themselves, until finally, the tax scheme was abolished in 2022.

Crisis and Organizing

The pandemic crisis and its devastating, long-term effects on the work and livelihood of musicians and other music industry workers, as we have seen, also led to an at least temporary politicization of some workers amongst an otherwise dominant attitude of (strategic) apoliticism. The process of politicization and practical worker organization was at least partly aided by the spare time some industry workers gained by the cancelling of live events and, at least in the first wave, the impossibility of rehearsing or recording in spaces shared by multiple people (this was, however, by no means an overall experience: the immense workload, for instance, on live music workers should not be underestimated, who, in 2020 and 2021, were faced with the necessity of continuously rescheduling and -organizing live events based on speculation of the progress of restrictions and their potential lifting; moreover, as we have seen, finding new jobs, dealing with homeschooling and other household-based responsibilities placed new burdens on the majority of workers). In the following, I briefly discuss an initiative materializing during the pandemic, which addressed the working conditions of self-employed musicians.

The association Alaphang ("Keynote") was founded in early 2021 as a branch of the trade union MZTSZ (Hungarian Musicians' and Dancers' Union) to organize self-employed musicians. As an active member of the union explained, they were under the impression that "up until the time of the pandemic, no one

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3   She used the expression "a jég hátán is megél"—literally, "she survives on the surface of the ice."

really looked for territories or platforms for the representation of interests where [musicians] could have a say in regulations affecting them" (interview with a union member, June 16, 2021). This observation fits my own conclusions from the qualitative research, as with the exception of this union member, none of those interviewed or participating in group sessions mentioned MZTSZ, not even during the sociodrama session where the group created a map of music industry bodies and trade organizations (sociodrama 4, June 16, 2020). In fact, some of my interviewees expressed their desire for a union for musicians, unaware of its existence. Indeed, up until the founding of Alaphang, popular musicians typically had no union membership. Within its first six months, Alaphang gathered about two-hundred to two-hundred and fifty members according to the interviewed musician, while the (controlled) membership of an adjoined Facebook group, consisting, in theory, only of self-employed musicians, reached 1300 (the difference between the two figures also indicates the reluctance of many to take the step of formally joining the union). Nevertheless, after just one year, and despite the efforts of the most active organizers, the branch became inactive. In the following, I summarize some of the difficulties involved in the organizing of musicians and music industry workers based on the promising, but ultimately unsuccessful example of the Alaphang branch. These difficulties may be understood to be indicative of the broader challenges of organizing creative labor today.

The first challenge is posed by structurally opposing interests hindering industry-based organizing and equality in representation. Some of the existing bodies, notably the Music Hungary Association, formally claim to represent all major professional groups of the music industries, among them promoters, managers, and musicians. In our group discussions, calls for solidarity and organizing against the crisis situation were also typically imagined on an "industry" level, involving various professions and roles. Nevertheless, there are clear discrepancies in positions and interests, for instance, between musicians and live music promoters. As the interviewed union member put it, referring to the power of promoters:

> The direction taken at any given point by the industry is clearly dictated by the side with which I, as a musician, am in a bargaining position [...], so we are practically posited on opposing sides. One side employs the musician, and on the other side, you have the musician, who expects some kind of reward, a form of payment or a business configuration that enables them to get their due fee. And exactly because [...] our interests in a great number of cases are contrary, musicians in general do not believe that Music Hungary represents them in any way. (interview with a union member, June 16, 2021)

A similar opposition of interests also applies to musicians versus (artist) managers or musicians versus record labels or management companies, the latter in both cases representing the side of capital against labor.[4] The above realization articulated by the union member is partly what led to the founding of a branch specifically for musicians. Yet, as they also pointed out, there are differences in hierarchical positions *within* the society of musicians that appear difficult to bridge:

> There is a huge faultline here, because there are those who are the top artists, and there are those artists who play, let's say, below, next to, behind, supporting those top artists. That is, there are top artists who are popular with the public, the public knows their names, and there are many musicians who often find themselves in a vulnerable relation, even in a relation of employment, with these top artists. (ibid.)

As the quote indicates, as employers, top-level artists may also be in positions of domination, with lower-ranking musicians, such as session musicians, subordinate to them.

> That a top artist would express their solidarity with session musicians who want this, for instance, this would never happen. And those session musicians may be playing behind the top artist at the Arena next week, but the top artist refuses to say something along the lines of "oh, the session musicians I work with say [unionizing] is good, okay, I understand their problems. I'm also joining." We will never get to this point. [...] There is no solidarity. [...] The faultlines are too deep. (ibid.)

As we have seen, the Hungarian popular musician and music industry profession is characterized by a high level of inequality in terms of income, with a small elite capable of earning a living from their (main) music careers. Musicians and industry workers belonging to this elite have high-level access to representation of their interests and yield a significant amount of symbolic, social, and other forms capital, therefore they are least concerned by the problems experienced by the mass of musicians struggling from day to day. As the union member put it:

> It is interesting to see that, on the one hand, when we are talking about a union, musicians in more marginalized genres, such as jazz musicians, or musicians in more precarious positions, such as classical musicians, or session musicians, who play here and there, effectively commodifying their labor, their musicianship, as hourly wage labor, these [groups] are very happy about [the union], because this is exactly what they

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4   Technicians also constitute a separate trade with their own collective body representing their interests (MPRT—Magyar Professzionális Rendezvénytechnikai Társaság [Hungarian Society of Event Technology Professionals]) and their own trade identity, which, as our focus groups involving technicians demonstrated, are distinct from that of the rest of the music industry professions in many ways.

need. But everyone says the union could [only be considered] a serious endeavor if there were more prominent names. But the more prominent names are difficult to convince, since they say, I was doing okay without a union so far. (ibid.)

Closely connected to this problem, the second set of challenges stems from the specificities of popular music as a cultural field in the Bourdieusian sense (Bourdieu [1992] 1995, 1993) wherein various workers are struggling for different positions, and where different positions are embedded into social hierarchies through displaying levels of autonomy versus heteronomy. The question of representation is aptly expressed in the excerpt above: ultimately, there is a mismatch between the logic of the star system and the cultural hierarchy on the one hand, wherein "prominent names" yield symbolic power, and on the other hand, the experience and skills required for union organizing. The latter, in theory, should be independent of musical achievement, the level of music (industry) professionalism, or artistic quality.

Differences between genres, as revealed by the labor process analysis, also divide musicians, as different genre conventions partly entail specific challenges. Those working in the pop-rock sphere are faced with vulnerability to political incorporation, while those in hip hop may primarily be experiencing vulnerability in relation to corporate sponsorship and platform-based demands and inequalities. The interviewed union member also highlighted the differences in dominant forms and conditions of work according to genre worlds:

> There is a segment, mainly in the pop-rock music sphere, who work in "working bands," you have five people, they form [for instance,] [rock band] Ivan and the Parazol, and then they're "one for all, all for one, we cry together, we laugh together." They, in effect, create this music out of love, which they then start running as a business, as a band, and so on. And what I see is that these bands, [at least] the more popular ones, say "we'll solve this for ourselves, we'll figure it out, we don't care how we are getting a pension, we'll play like this for the rest of our lives, it'll be fine." In other words, they do not sell their activity as wage laborers like a trombonist who plays back up for Presser,[5] then sits in the symphonic orchestra, and then goes and plays background music in a small club alongside some restaurant service. (ibid.)

The excerpt also explains why there was an overrepresentation of jazz musicians in Alaphang, since they frequently rely on various forms of session work and other gigs (*hakni* work). The explanation implies that such musicians are more likely to see their work as "work" that needs to be recognized and remunerated.

The specific logic of the cultural field, moreover, may also hinder potential "natural coalitions." The hospitality sector—restaurants, cafés, hotels, festival

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5   The reference is to Gábor Presser, one of the biggest names in Hungarian popular music.

catering—closely intertwined with the live music industry, was also among the areas most affected by both the COVID-19 restrictions and the subsequent energy crisis and waves of inflation. Yet, despite the fact that cafés, restaurants, and hotels provide performance spaces and income for a multitude of bar and wedding musicians, as well as, for instance, pop-rock musicians earning (extra) money playing weddings as a side job, in a group session I co-organized with Ágnes Blaskó and Máté Horváth for collectively interpreting the results of the sociodrama research with music industry workers (on June 21, 2022), a participating music manager made a sarcastic remark about how their profession—as music industry workers—is often viewed as belonging to the hospitality sector. They were often regarded by society, according to her, as entertainers ("*vendéglátósok*"). The way in which she articulated the term, and the reaction from the rest of the participants—predominantly managers and promoters— who were in agreement, made it evident that to them, "*vendéglátós*" was a derogatory term. Since those present mainly constituted music industry workers in prominent positions with potential power to make change, the articulated class-based self-identity of the "music industry" segment, based on a bourgeois sense of artistic autonomy, appeared as a potential obstacle to forming what could otherwise be seen as a natural coalition based on the shared difficulties and the connections between the two sectors. The derogatory use of the term also acted as symbolic violence against entertainment musicians, serving to assert the manager's own position.

A third type of challenge is posed by existing negative experiences of music industry workers organizing ultimately unsuccessfully, for instance, following the West-Balkán night-club tragedy in 2011. As the union member illustrated such anxieties:

> [People say,] My God, person X and Y will again be part of this, they will have themselves voted in, Jesus, this will be just as terrible as when we tried ten years ago. The same guys will appear, those that are very active but very stupid, or very active and not stupid, but are looking for their own advancement in such a position and somehow we need to prevent that. (ibid.)

Fourthly, the mentioned individualizing effect of the dominant entrepreneurial mode of working that characterizes self-employed musicians in addition to heightened competition, also acts against collective strategies. Moreover, as the sociodrama analysis presented in chapter 2 demonstrated, entrepreneurialism is combined with a hegemonic belief in a free market, which, according to this belief, when operates "healthily," automatically solves problems. The experience of the union member confirmed this: "Ultimately, what I keep hearing is that everyone should live off the market. What do we want unions for [they tell me]? I make music people like, they buy it, I'm doing well."

Despite the obstacles standing in the way of cross-industry solidarity, as the union member's above remark about rock bands' mode of working indicates, bands and their broader teams functioned as a "natural" unit of solidarity during the COVID-19 crisis. As mentioned in chapter 2, after the announcement of the list of Warehouse Gigs grant recipients—a grant that only awards a fee to musicians—some of the selected bands publicly announced that they would distribute their fees among their broader team, including their technical crew (Bodnár 2020). I have also highlighted the extra emotional labor exerted by female managers in particular, who looked after the mental wellbeing of the musicians they worked with during the first two pandemic waves. In many cases, therefore, the broader team around bands functioned as a community of care and solidarity also in a material sense. This is a specificity that future workers' initiatives could recognize and build upon. Other "natural" ways of organizing are present in local- or genre-based music scenes and collectives, such as the mentioned hip hop collectives: these could also function as the basis of building networks of solidarity and the representation of worker interests. Finally, the organizing of workers in analogous positions in different cultural areas may also hold potential, in particular areas that are connected through their work: for instance, musicians could form unions or other forms of association with photographers, videographers, or media workers based on the similarity of their positions in the cultural industries, their working conditions, and their reliance on each other's work.

Social Reproduction and Solidarity

Regardless of the specific form the organization of workers assumes, in order to facilitate real change, the organization of workers needs to recognize the fundamental issue of multifaceted gender inequalities in the division and recognition of labor observed across work in making music. My focus on the contribution of the household, informality, and emotional labor has demonstrated that women's unpaid labor, reinforced through patriarchal and heteronormative gender roles, norms which render it invisible by naturalizing it, is as much a systemic feature of the music industries as it is of global capitalism. Although gender relations have been increasingly addressed at industry roundtables or conferences and workshops in Hungary, they are invariably thematized in a dominant liberal framework, with a focus on representation and gatekeeping that strictly follows discourses produced in the global core. Focusing merely on increasing the number of women in areas where they are underrepresented, however, leaves the patriarchal structure unchallenged. As opposed to a deeper understanding of the ways

in which working conditions are shaped by global relations of dependency, or a reflection on the processes of housewifization—accelerated in the wake of the recent polycrisis—and its relation to digital platform capitalism, gender equality is viewed along a line of civilization where the "West" is mythologized as a morally superior center (Csányi 2024), where gender equality has (nearly) been achieved, and in comparison with which Hungary and the Hungarian music industries are lagging behind. Nor have these discussions integrated a critique of the ever-tightening (alter-)gender regime of the post-2010 new hegemony, reflected on the Fidesz governments' gender politics or taken political action against these. Suggested solutions at these industry events, and also our own mentioned forum organized for the collective interpretation of sociodrama results, have tended to be restricted to social entrepreneurship—without consideration of the specificities and problems with entrepreneurship on the semiperiphery, such as its embeddedness into unpaid female domestic labor (Fodor and Kispeter 2014) and its role in reinforcing fundamental relations of exploitation based on capital accumulation—and application for EU grants.

However, the realm of social reproduction and informality, if reproductive labor is radically reorganized in more socially just ways, may also hold the key to the way out of the relations of patriarchy in the capitalist world-system. In a paper decentering the precarity discourse from a global perspective, Mariya Ivancheva and Kathryn Keating (2020) juxtapose individual understandings of autonomy with Kathleen Millar's (2014) notion of "relational autonomy." Relational autonomy refers to a system where managing economic uncertainty and crisis becomes possible through mobilizing relationships of care. In such a system, informality is utilized as a pool of resources for social reproduction instead of being directly channeled into the Global Social Factory (Csányi 2023). In agreement with Ivancheva and Keating, I also believe that putting a price tag on invisible and unpaid reproductive work, including emotional labor, offers no long-term solution to the unequal division of labor, as this would merely reinforce the existing capitalist system through a process of commodification (Ivancheva and Keating 2020, 272). Although economic and social crises tend to reinforce the patriarchal division of labor (Dunaway 2012), crises can also create opportunities for social change. Initiatives aimed at the creation of networks and economies of solidarity, such as the Solidarity Economy Centre (SZGK) in Budapest, can spearhead, for example, projects connecting trade-union-based worker organizing with housing cooperatives, cooperatives connecting local food producers on the principle of food autonomy, and/or communal green energy projects; projects that are based on the idea that production, including cultural production, need not necessarily serve capital accumulation. Instead, as Ágnes Gagyi (2020, 7) proposes, they may serve the reproduction of life.

Appendices

Semi-Structured Interviews

2018–2022
n=39

GENDER

■ Male ■ Female
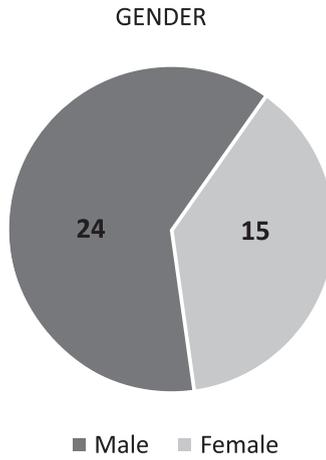
Figure A1.1. Gender ratio (semi-structured interviews)

AGE
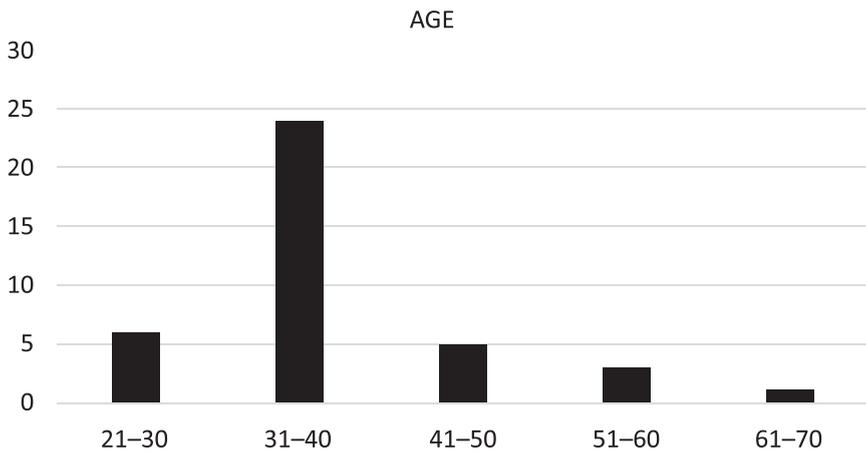
Figure A1.2. Age distribution (semi-structured interviews)
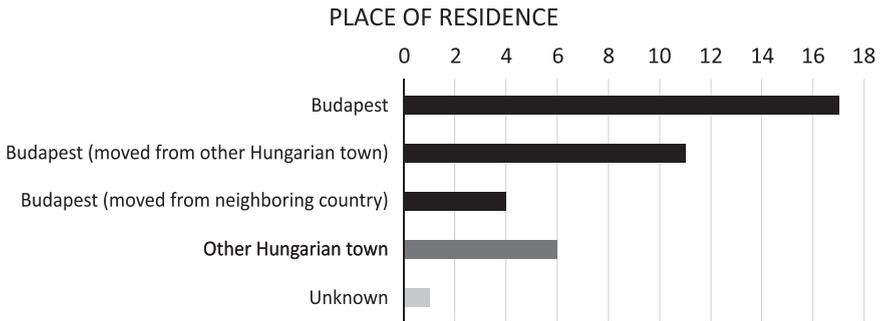
PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Figure A1.3. Place of residence (semi-structured interviews)

PRIMARY OCCUPATION/ROLE
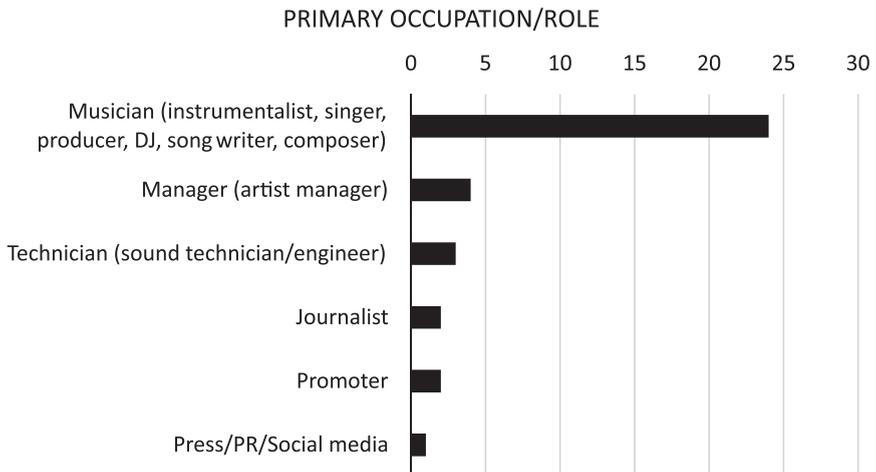
Figure A1.4. Primary occupation or role (semi-structured interviews)

GENRE (MUSICIANS)

Pop-rock genres (n=13)

Electronic and hip hop-based genres (n=4)

Other genres (entertainment, applied, jazz, classical) (n=10)
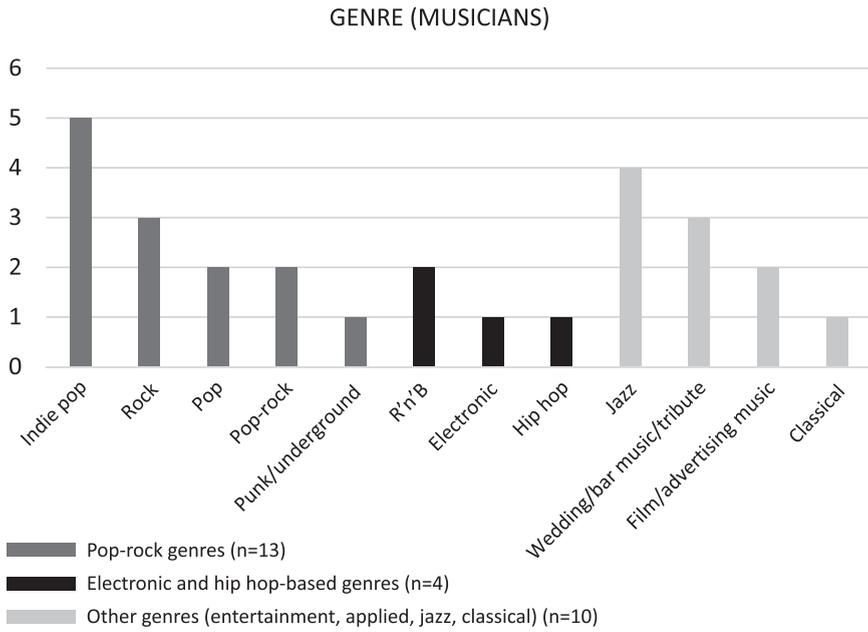
Figure A1.5. Genre profile of interviewed musicians (semi-structured interviews)

APPENDIX 2

Time-Use Interviews

2019–2020
n=33

number of interviewees with whom semi-structured interviews were also conducted: 12

GENDER

17   16

■ Male   ■ Female
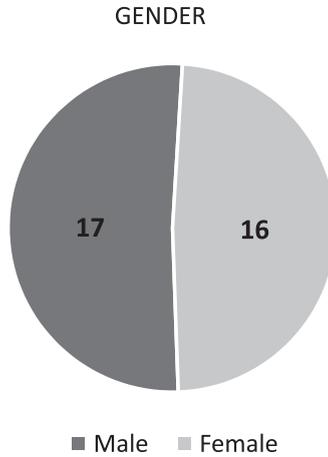
Figure A2.1. Gender ratio (time-use interviews)

AGE
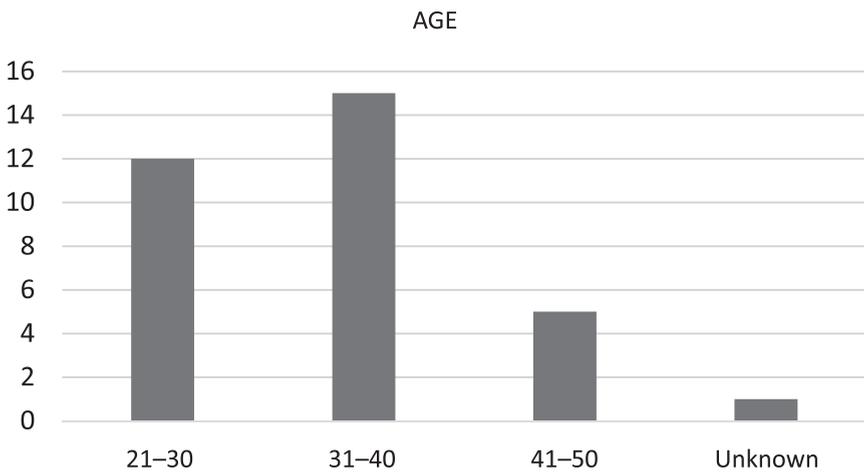
Figure A2.2. Age distribution (time-use interviews)
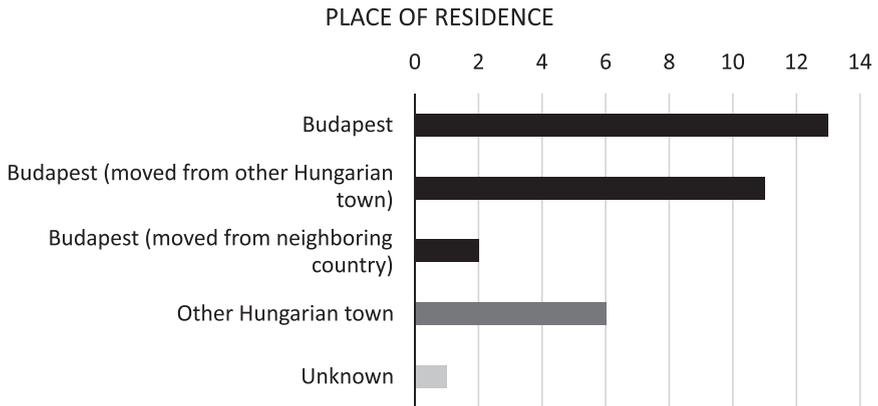
PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Figure A2.3. Place of residence (time-use interviews)

PRIMARY OCCUPATION/ROLE
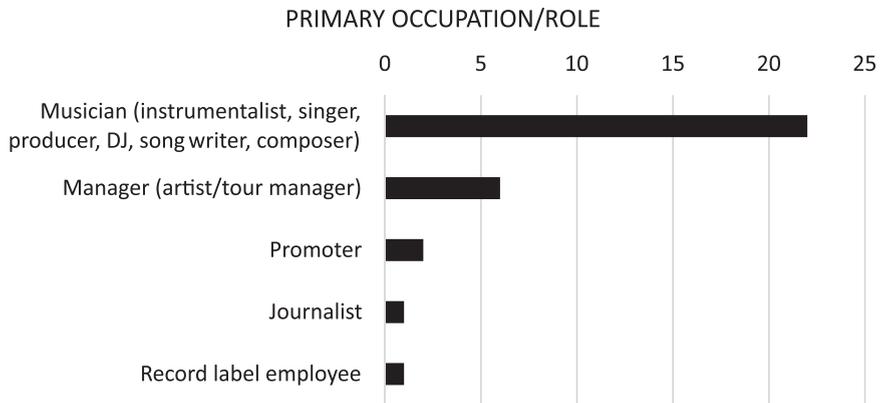
Figure A2.4. Primary occupation or role (time-use interviews)

GENRE (MUSICIANS)

Pop-rock genres (n=8)
Electronic and hip hop-based genres (n=6)
Other genres (entertainment, applied, jazz) (n=8)
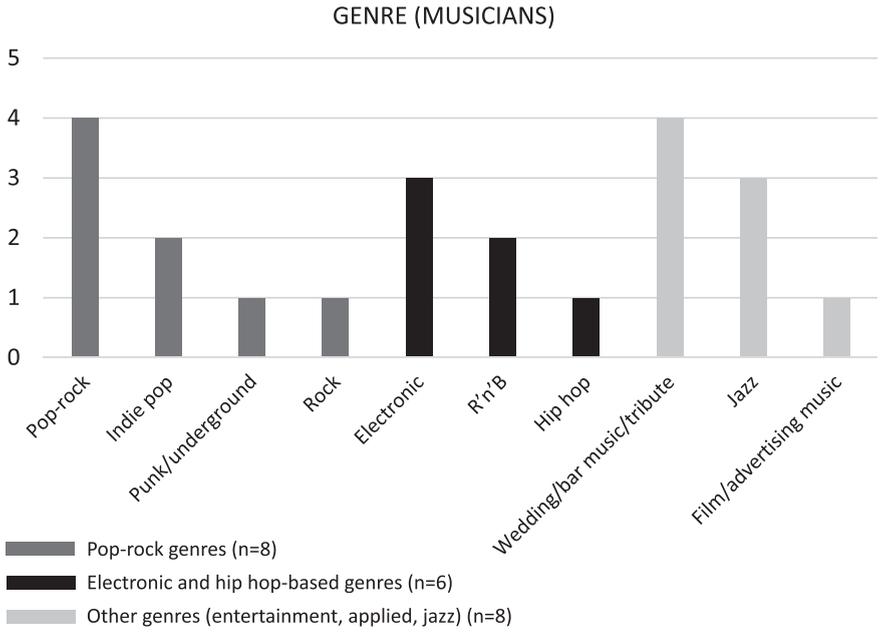
Figure A2.5. Genre profile of interviewed musicians (time-use interviews)

Time-use interview sample (extract)

TIME/ DURATION	PRIMARY ACTIVITY	SECONDARY ACTIVITY	PARTICIPANT(S) /PRESENT	COMMENTS
11:00–11:20	Tidying living-room and bathroom, washing-up	Zombie video game video continues in background	–	A student is coming, she doesn't like to leave personal things, clothes around / she hates washing-up, the zombie video helps to distract her
11:20–11:40	Puts on regular clothes instead of jogging outfit, puts on make-up		–	
11:40–12:00	Sits down to piano and looks over songs they will go over with students		–	She is not nervous, only a little when new students come
12:00–13:00	Teaching, with student coming to her home—singing lesson with her accompanying on piano / Starts with breathing exercises, diaphragm exercises, voice projection, a little meditation at the beginning / Singing / At the end of the lesson, they go over the songs the students sing regularly—pleasure value but they also work on them	Makes coffee—they need 10 minutes to "arrive"	Participant: student	Both students are long-time / Pedagogical method: she learned it from her own teachers, developed through her own experience, there was no teacher training at the music school. It is mostly a coach perspective
13:05–13:15	She did not have much time to do anything		–	What she was trying to do: / she had an improvisational musical theater performance in the evening. The audience there are asked to fill out small pieces of paper upon arrival (what kind of Hungarian song they want to hear, name a poem etc.), she usually prepares these in photoshop, then sends them to the theater where they are printed. She knew she would have no time after the second singing lesson as she needs to get there in time for soundcheck, which meant she would need to take her laptop with her

TIME/ DURATION	PRIMARY ACTIVITY	SECONDARY ACTIVITY	PARTICIPANT(S) /PRESENT	COMMENTS
13:15–14:30	Second student (was supposed to arrive at half past but arrived 15 mins early)		Participant: student	Also left late
Some time after 14:30	Beginning to edit the small pieces of paper for the performance	Has lunch	–	Usually, she prepares her lunch in the morning, but on this occasion, she had cooked the previous evening. She always tries to cook for herself—she is gluten sensitive so needs to be careful, and it is also expensive and a waste of money to eat out She is running late, was supposed to leave at 14:30 for the theater [*specifics of theatre omitted*]
Some time after 15:00	Preparing to leave		–	
15:25	Leaves for the theater, taking the bus	Sends a text message to the pianist informing him that she will be late—instead of half past 3, she arrives at around 4 On the bus she listens to three songs the lyrics of which she needs to learn for a gig she has to jump in (it is difficult—poems of Hungarian poet [*name omitted*] and there is no connection between the lines) She is looking out for a conductor as she does not usually buy a ticket—stands strategically near the front door Messenger is constantly on in the mean-time—she messages people she had had no time to contact —her mom, friends, and also work-related	Participants: through messenger: aquaintances, friends, mother Present: fellow passengers (among whom she is looking out for the conductor)	Usually, she rides her bicycle, but she knew it would be late when she would be returning from the theater and did not want to risk it tired She cannot afford a monthly pass Traveling is usually complex as she has a lot on her mind She was annoyed as she was late—she hates being late and hates people who are late, but recently there have been an increasing number of such occasions—she is not disciplined enough. There is no structure in her life, she would need to create one that she can keep to. Without a structure, she feels that everything just flows

APPENDIX 3

Sociodrama

	Date	Offline/ online	No. of participants	No. of new participants	Occupation of participants[1]	Gender of participants: F/M	Place of residence: Budapest/ other	Main theme
1	12/01/2019	offline	6	6	2 program managers, musician/social media manager, PR manager at venue, artist manager, tour manager/ communication manager	2/4	5/1	autonomy and dependencies
2	02/19/2020	offline	7	2	2 musicians, musician/social media manager, PR manager at venue, program manager, artist manager, tour manager/ communication manager	2/5	6/1	autonomy and dependencies: "behind the scenes" (foreground/ background)
3	05/13/2020	online	3	0 (all 3 for 3rd time)	program manager, tour manager/communication manager, PR manager at venue	2/1	2/1	autonomy and dependencies: survival strategies
4	06/16/2020	online	7	7	2 musicians, program manager, venue owner, manager, DJ/promoter, sound technician	2/5	3/4	autonomy and dependencies: survival strategies
5	06/18/2020	online	3	3	musician, promoter, sound technician	1/2	0/3	autonomy and dependencies: survival strategies
6	06/29/2020	online	3	3	musicians: members of a band	0/3	0/3	autonomy and dependencies: network and career of a band

	Date	Offline/ online	No. of partici- pants	No. of new par- ticipants	Occupation of participants[1]	Gender of participants: F/M	Place of residence: Budapest/ other	Main theme
7	08/03/2020	online	3	0 (con-tinuation of 06-29 group)	musicians: members of a band	0/3	0/3	autonomy and dependencies: network and career of a band
8	08/04/2020	online	6	3 (con-tinuation of 06-16 group)	musician, DJ/promoter, sound technician, manager, promoter, DJ/social media manager	2/4	3/3	autonomy and dependencies: crisis and solidarity
9	02/08/2021	online	5	4	4 musicians, manager/promoter	3/2	3/2	emotional labor and gender relations
10	02/24/2021	online	3	3	manager/marketing specialist at record label, promoter/musician, musician	2/1	2/1	emotional labor and gender relations
11	03/11/2021	online	3	3	manager/promoter, musician/music journalist, musician	2/1	2/1	emotional labor and gender relations

APPENDIX 4

Focus Groups

	Date	Online/ offline	No. of participants	Gender of participants	Place of residence	Occupations[1]
1	08/10/2020	offline	4	3F/1M	Budapest	promoters, managers
2	08/26/2020	online	4	1F/3M	outside of capital	promoters, managers
3	09/27/2020	offline	4	4M	Budapest	technicians
4	10/22/2020	offline	4	4F	Budapest	technicians
5	10/28/2020	offline	4	4F	Budapest	musicians: all-female band
6	11/04/2020	offline	4	4M	mixed	musicians: front singers
7	11/25/2020	online	2	2F	mixed	musicians: front singers
8	12/04/2020	online	3	3M	mixed	technicians
9	12/17/2020	online	4	4M	outside of capital	behind-the-scenes workers
10	02/03/2021	online	3	3F	outside of capital	behind-the-scenes workers

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While music as labor feeds into the capitalist cultural industries, this book proves that in this sector informality greatly permeates and governs power relations and the allocations of resources. The significant level of informal involvement of the household in the creative and reproductive processes is also explored. It is particularly in the semiperipheral context that the relationship between home-based work and paid work is unbalanced.

This book embraces the widest possible range of workers in the music industry. It deals with all music genres from high-flying to commercial and observes various workers in the production chain beyond musicians. Niche segments of the sector, such as YouTube-based commercial hip hop, are given special treatment. Using a variety of empirical research methods, the study examines the trends as workers are pushed towards digital entrepreneurship and platform work, on the one hand, and live performance, on the other. The focus on domestic work and informality offers a feminist analysis of work in music. This approach sheds light on gendered divisions of labor and forms of (self-)exploitation that usually remain invisible. The book proposes a new model of cultural autonomy that takes account of the semiperipheral relationship of music industry workers and institutions to both the market and the state.

"Expanding our understanding of what counts in the production of popular culture, Emília Barna performs a double reveal: beyond the usual suspects of the Global North; behind the most audible forms of musical labour. Here, professional musicians jostle alongside backstage industry employees, unpaid volunteers and domestic workers. Sensitised by its sophisticated hybrid of feminist social reproduction theory and world-systems analysis, Working in Music in the Semiperiphery locates the contemporary realities of Hungarian popular music within evolving state-market relations. A genuine revolution in how we make sense of making music."

Toby Bennett, Senior Lecturer in Media, Culture and Organisation, University of Westminster, author of *Corporate Life in the Digital Music Industry: Remaking the Major Record Label from the Inside Out* (2024)

"So much more than a 'case study' of Hungary, Emília Barna's book is an essential contribution to understanding musical labour in the digital era."

David Hesmondhalgh, Professor of Media, Music and Culture, University of Leeds, author of *The Cultural Industries* (2002), *Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries* (2011), and *Why Music Matters* (2013)

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